

A DAUGHTER *of the* REVOLUTION

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A DAUGHTER OF
THE REVOLUTION

A DAUGHTER OF THE REVOLUTION

BY
ESTHER SINGLETON

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To

* * *

Friend of many years
Whose sympathy
Crowns all my efforts

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A DAUGHTER OF THE REVOLUTION

CHAPTER I

MILDRED ASHTON COMES DOWN THE STAIRWAY

ON a bright day in November, 1910, Mildred Ashton started down the wide stairway of *Wild Acres*, the old Ashton home on Long Island, as the tall clock on the landing was beginning to strike twelve hollow, booming notes. The laughing moon that peeped over the clouds above the handsome dial saw a charming girl of twenty; her graceful figure erect, her head slightly tilted, her left hand lightly touching the mahogany rail, her slender foot arched and the tip of her red slipper daintily pointed and ready to be placed upon the step below in what one sensitive to line would have properly described as "the minuet pose."

Unconsciously she came down the stairway of *Wild Acres* in exactly the same way that Dolly Ashton, a famous belle of Revolutionary days, had often descended, although no one knew this but the laughing moon. If the latter noticed that the girl of the Twentieth Century held her head in the same proud way, had the same delicate features and slender aristocratic hands and feet, that she carried with her a slight perfume of roses, and that she moved with the same quick grace he kept this knowledge to himself. He greeted the young girl of 1910 with the same cheery, though vapid, smile with which he had always greeted her ancestress of 1776, little caring that such a trifling thing as himself should have lived through a hundred and fifty odd years while beauty, mind, heart and grace had crumbled into dust. Moreover, the old clock, which, with its solemn tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock, had summoned him to his duty of denoting the real full moon for so many generations, little cared whether its own slow notes that reverberated through the house marked hours of joy, or hours of sadness. With equal indifference it had struck its gong for many births, marriages and deaths, all duly re-

corded in the family Bible that had rested on its mahogany stand in the library ever since John Ashton had placed it there in 1758, when the house was completed.

The twelve notes were now striking an hour of sadness. At least, it was an hour of sadness to Mildred; for, although she was coming down the stairs lightly, her heart was very heavy.

It had been found necessary to rent *Wild Acres*; and Mildred had just received a letter from Mr. Thomas Small, the one real estate man in Port Washington, notifying her that he had procured a desirable tenant who wished to lease the estate for two years.

Wild Acres was very dear to Mildred Ashton; for here, she, an orphan, had spent the happy years of her childhood and girlhood with her grandfather and grandmother in the delightful home that they made. On their deaths, which occurred almost simultaneously, she had passed into the guardianship of a widowed and childless aunt, Mrs. Van Norden, who, caring little for *Wild Acres* and nothing whatever for Mildred, appeared from Paris, where she had lived for years, in mourning of the latest cut and style, to attend

to the necessary matters of business. She, the sole heir to the Ashton estate, having signed all the documents, took passage as soon as possible on *La Provence* for her beloved Paris.

Mildred, invited, but not pressed very much, to accompany her aunt, preferred to remain in New York; and Mrs. Van Norden, rejoicing to be free of a young companion, who might bore her, placed her under the sheltering wing of one of her own early friends, Mrs. Steele, who was delighted to welcome Mildred to her large and lonely house on Park Avenue. Mrs. Van Norden allowed her niece sufficient income to provide herself with all the necessities and luxuries that her social position demanded. Mrs. Van Norden closed *Wild Acres*, sold the horses and the fine herd of Jerseys, and gave away the peacocks and the fancy pigeons. The gardener was allowed to care for the green-houses and gardens and to make what he could out of them. For several years afterwards *Wild Acres* was only opened for a few weeks in the summer, when Mildred and Mrs. Steele ran down for a brief visit.

Mildred awoke with a shock to the loss of her dearly-loved grandparents and her

changed conditions; but youth soon adapts itself to change; and it was not long before she, being of a cheerful disposition, was happy in her studies in music and French, in her dancing-class at Dodworth's, and in the social gaieties of the younger set.

Four years had passed. Mildred's twentieth mile-post brought her face to face with new conditions.

"One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow,"

and so it seemed to Mildred. Mrs. Steele's sudden death was followed by that of Mrs. Van Norden and *Wild Acres* became the property of Mildred Ashton, next of kin. To own *Wild Acres* delighted her greatly; but the next news received from Mr. Carpenter, the family lawyer, revealed the unwelcome fact that Mrs. Van Norden, having run through the family fortune, had mortgaged *Wild Acres*. There was nothing left to pay off this mortgage, nor to keep up *Wild Acres* were it paid.

Calling at the Steele house in Park Avenue, where Mildred was now packing for removal to *Wild Acres*, Mr. Carpenter told the grand-

daughter of his old friend, John Ashton, that there was but one thing to do; and that was to rent *Wild Acres*, to pay off the mortgage and the taxes, and to keep up the place.

"Oh, I couldn't think of it," cried Mildred, at the first suggestion, "it seems a desecration. I can't bear to think of strangers at *Wild Acres*. I hate to think of strangers living in our dear old home and using all our things, roaming about the lawns and the lovely gardens. Oh, I couldn't think of it, Mr. Carpenter."

"There is no other way out of it, my child," answered Mr. Carpenter, his eyes slightly moistening as he remembered past hospitality and happy hours in the home of his old friends, "unless," he paused, "unless you sell it."

"Sell *Wild Acres*!" cried Mildred, indignantly. "NEVER!" Then, after a short pause and with a sad, gentle intonation, "Will it really have to be rented, Mr. Carpenter?"

"Yes," the lawyer replied, "there is nothing else to do."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Mildred softly.

"I am going to Port Washington to-morrow. You give me the authority, and I will see Tom

Small and get him to find us a good and reliable tenant. My dear child," added Mr. Carpenter, noting the pain in her face, "there is no other way. And now," he continued, bringing out, with a calmness that amazed him, the question he had been dreading to ask, "what about your future?"

"My future?" Mildred questioned, lifting her brows in surprise and opening her big brown eyes very wide.

"Yes, my dear," replied Mr. Carpenter, "your future. Don't you know that Mrs. Van Norden left nothing? Your base of supplies is cut off."

"What do you mean, Mr. Carpenter?" asked Mildred; and then a quick light of intelligence came into her eyes. "Do you mean that I"—here she paused—"that I shall have to work—to earn my own living?" She brought the words out very slowly, as if she could hardly bear to speak them.

"I am afraid so," answered the lawyer, bluntly.

At that moment Mildred felt as a young bird must feel that is suddenly taken to the edge of the nest and pushed by an unfeeling mother into the abyss of air below, without

any knowledge of the use of its wings. Mildred was frightened—frightened as we all are of the unknown, the untried.

She merely replied with white lips, "Thank you, Mr. Carpenter, for telling me. I will write you a letter authorizing you to rent *Wild Acres*, dreadful as it is for me to do it. It is strange to realize that I have nothing to take care of me—that I must work for myself—that I am alone in the world and suddenly penniless. Mrs. Steele, too, who would have helped me so much with good advice and loving sympathy, is gone. I must go and think things out alone; so, good-bye, Mr. Carpenter. Thank you very much."

Mr. Carpenter rose and took the icy hand that the young girl held to him. "Good-bye, Mildred," he replied. "Things will come right in the end, I am sure."

"They only do in novels, Mr. Carpenter," laughed Mildred, trying to be gay. "Thank you again, and good-bye. Please come to see me at *Wild Acres*. I am going down to-morrow. Perhaps, I may be able to tell you then what I shall have decided to do."

Mildred had only been three days in her home when the letter already referred to from

Mr. Small arrived announcing the capture of a tenant. In the meantime, she had been trying to balance the possibilities of success and failure, if she chose to attempt a musical, or a literary, career. Mildred knew very well that she was an accomplished pianist,—but would her music, always a delight in the drawing-rooms of friends, stand the test of cold and professional critics if she placed it in a larger frame? She hardly thought so. She had seen too many ambitious young pianists fail before New York audiences.

Mildred was an unusually sympathetic accompanist. Many artists for whom she had occasionally played had complimented her on her dependable support and her musical insight into such songs as Robert Franz's, Schubert's and Schumann's; but she did not care to specialize in this thankless branch of music. As for giving lessons,—that idea was intolerable. So, after much deliberation, she decided to try her fortune with her pen.

She was now coming downstairs to see Mr. Carpenter, whose name had just been announced.

CHAPTER II

WILD ACRES

W*ILD ACRES* was one of those delightful New York houses that has survived to tell of the life and luxuries of past generations. It was built in the days just preceding the passage of the Stamp Act; and, consequently, was of a type that we now love to call Colonial, though Georgian would be a much more descriptive adjective. Nor is that adjective quite enough. The style of architecture is so distinctively American that Georgian-American, or American-Georgian, would be a still better designation.

Its white clapboards and green shutters, *Wild Acres* shared in common with many a simple Long Island farm-house; but not its ample proportions; and certainly not its handsome Neo-Classic portico, whose four tall and slender columns supported a pediment decorated with corbels and pierced in the centre by a half-circle window.

Wild Acres was distinguished by a recessed balcony that only ran across part of the second story; and here was a handsome door that led from the hall to the balcony, with decorative side-lights and fan-light, corresponding to the main entrance door in the floor below.

Having never been without occupants, *Wild Acres* had escaped that dreary atmosphere that gathers around some old houses and suggests an old nest that the birds have forsaken.

The sides of the portico steps had always been adorned with tubs of blooming flowers and the little balcony above had always been filled with pots and tubs and boxes of blossoming plants. Mildred still kept up this custom.

At the left side of the house an enormous wistaria had been growing as long as the oldest inhabitants of Port Washington could remember and had now twined its large and thickly twisted ropes around one of the columns and over half of the balcony. In the Spring its enormous blossoms appeared from a distance like a shower of purple rain.

It is almost needless to say that this façade looked towards the main entrance gate, some distance away, to which the beautifully

trimmed lawn rolled with a gentle undulation. Upon this green velvet various fine old trees were grouped: cedars, spruces, copper-beeches, silver poplars and horse-chestnuts. Two Lombardy poplars had guarded the entrance gate since the early days of the Nineteenth Century, when Thomas Jefferson did so much to make this kind of tree fashionable in America. The carriage-drive circled in front of the portico around a green oval, in the centre of which stood in the Summer a large and valuable palm that had been in the family long before Mildred's advent. At intervals along the driveway large tubs of luxuriant, pale blue hydrangeas had always been placed in the early days of June ever since Mildred could remember.

The distinguishing feature of the other side of *Wild Acres* that faced the Sound, was a large and wide verandah, smothered with honeysuckle and pink roses. The lawn on this side, thickly set with maples, swept to the bluff, which was densely wooded. On the left a tennis-court had been laid out some forty years ago. Beyond this were two large conservatories and the series of lovely flower-gardens; beyond them lay the kitchen-gardens;

and still beyond stretched fields of wheat and clover. Along the bluff, for half a mile, a grove of forest trees completely screened the bank; and through this woods a mossy, winding path led down a wild tangle of undergrowth mingled with ferns, honeysuckle, Virginia creeper, eglantine and wild flowers of many kinds, to the sandy shore and its small dock.

It is hard to say when *Wild Acres* looked its best. Perhaps it was in the Spring, when the crocuses were darting up through the grass and the beds of tulips showed miraculous cups of red, gold and purple; when the wistaria was swaying its blossoms in the gentle breezes; when the periwinkle was just beginning to open those mysterious and illusive pale blue stars beneath glossy leaves; when the peonies were bending low with the weight of their spicy globes of red, white and pink; when the syringas were dropping their petals of perfumed snow; and when the lilac bushes were nothing but mists of purplish pink.

However, *Wild Acres* was delightful at all seasons, within as well as without. The old house had been fortunate in never having passed from the possession of the family.

Consequently, whoever entered the door felt instinctively the continuous life of generations, whose social position had never been questioned and whose fortunes had never been disturbed.

To the original furniture of the Anglo-Dutch and Chippendale periods, bought when the house was finished in the middle of the Eighteenth Century, later generations had added various articles in the new fashions as they came in, so that now the house was a veritable museum of old furniture, china, silver and cut-glass. Old costumes, swords, powder-horns and relics of many kinds were stowed away in the attic.

Portraits of the Ashtons still hung in the hall, drawing-room and library; but Mildred had distributed the colored English prints and mezzotints in the dining-room and bedrooms.

The last three days that she had been spending in her old home, so soon to pass into the keeping of strangers, made Mildred very sad. She lived over again the happy memories of her childhood and began to feel the loss of her grandfather and grandmother more keenly than ever before. Now it seemed as if they had really vanished from her forever.

Mrs. O'Toole, a faithful retainer of the Ashtons long before Mildred's day, and who, therefore, considered herself as knowing much more about the family's tastes and prejudices than Mildred could ever hope to know, had been helping her get the house ready for the tenants. They had now finished their task. Mildred was making her last round of inspection, accompanied by the old housekeeper.

"Mrs. O'Toole," said Mildred, as they paused in her grandmother's room, so full of loved memories, "call John and tell him to carry this work-table into the attic," as her eyes fell on the delicate Louis Seize mahogany desk with its tambour shutter, where she had learned from her grandmother to sew daintily and beautifully. "I can't let strangers use *that*," she added, "and—oh, wait a minute, Mrs. O'Toole, let him take the mahogany knife-boxes in the dining-room. It isn't necessary to leave those for the tenants."

"Indade, Miss Mildred, indade I'd be lav-ing thim a great deal less, if I had my way. They have too much intirely," replied the sympathetic Mrs. O'Toole, wiping her eyes with the corner of her green and white checked gingham apron. "I wish we could lave our-

selves here and have the old days back."

"Then lock the attic door," continued Mildred, "and bring the key to me."

There was nothing now to be done. Mildred, therefore, had a little time to take farewell of the gardens.

The gardens of *Wild Acres* were framed in tall walls of cedar, each wall broken by a hollowed out and deeply recessed arch, through which you passed into the next garden. Around these cedar arbors and in the centre of each garden were box-bordered flower beds.

It would have been a bad time to have taken a stranger through these gardens; but Mildred looked at them with a retrospective eye and saw far more than the few frost-bitten dahlias, chrysanthemums and late asters that were withering on their brittle stalks. These gardens were planted many years before the fashion of making gardens of a special color. Consequently, flowers of all sizes, of all kinds, of all hues, and of all scents mingled here in a perfect riot of delight from early Spring to late Autumn.

"Here is the old calycanthus shrub," exclaimed Mildred, as she entered the first gar-

den, "how I used to delight in crushing its stiff purple-brown buds in my hand; here by the white spiræa, which always blooms so early in the Spring, I used to come and wonder at the sprays of delicate pink Bleeding-Hearts in the neighboring bed; here, I used to look for the cowslips to peep up at me from under their leaves and thought perhaps one day I might find Ariel asleep in one of the blossoms; here were the Johnny Jump-ups, which I was silly enough to imagine were little fairy boys; here grew the Snap-Dragons, that I was so afraid of, with their savage blood-stained jaws; here were the fox-gloves; this is where the Sweet William grew—I always thought it was the ghost that came to Margaret in the old ballad and avoided it; here, the brown velvet wall flowers (I smell them now!); here the Canterbury Bells; here, the Bachelors' Buttons; here, the Mourning Bride; here the Lady Washington geranium, which I used to insist on having pinned on my little low-necked lace dress when I was going to a party, partly because I loved its decorative velvet petals and partly because its name seemed to give me distinction; here is where the larkspur lifts its tall blue spears; here are the heliotrope beds;

here, the mignonette; and here is the bed of verbenas, from which I used to pull flowers to make a wreath for my doll, by sticking the tiny blossoms one into another; here is a clump of ribbon-grass; here the Dusty Miller; here are the marigolds—

‘And winking Mary-buds begin
To ope their golden eyes’;

here is the lily garden, with the yellow and white day lilies and the tiger-lilies; here is the violet bed; here is the lily-of-the-valley bed; and here are the currants and gooseberries.”

Thus Mildred wandered from garden to garden until she reached the last of the series, the garden of little fruits, which led to the special pride of the Ashtons,—the Rosary.

The Rosary was entered by descending ten broad grass steps cut into the terrace; for it was a sunken garden. There were roses, roses, roses everywhere! There were arbors of roses; there were frames of roses; there were trellises over which the roses climbed and tumbled over again in masses of bloom; there were huge bushes; there were little bushes; there were tall single roses; there were dwarf single roses; there were roses sprawling on the

ground; and roses wreathed and enwreathed the large stone Sun-dial in the very centre of the garden.

All of these were framed in by four immense walls of roses growing on high trellises. The old-fashioned Baltimore Belle and Queen of the Prairie struggled with the pink and crimson Ramblers and Dorothy Perkins to see which could climb the highest and blossom the most.

People learned in roses recognized the sweet Hundred-Leaved; the small Burgundy; the large, delicious Cabbage from Provence; various Noisettes; the little Bansias; the Maiden's Blush; the Madame Plantier; the York and Lancaster, red, white and mottled; the magnificent Jacqueminot; the eglantine; and tea-roses of many kinds.

The Rosary was, therefore, a mass of scarlet, pink, crimson, orange, yellow and white blossoms that lavishly showered petals and incense upon the ground and in the air.

"I am glad," sighed Mildred, "that I do not have to leave in blossoming time. I do not believe I could have stood it."

So saying, Mildred walked to the centre of the garden to look once more at the Sun-

dial. A long twig was lying across the plate. She pulled it aside to read again the familiar legend:

“I mark ye hours,
Man notes ye time;
Spite storme and showers
Ye sun will shine.”

“Dear old Sun-dial!” exclaimed Mildred, encircling it with her arms and laying her head upon them, “you want to cheer me up,—don’t you? You have a new message for me to-day. It’s storming very hard just now, dear old Sun-dial; but I will try to see your sun. I will carry your message with me to New York: I will try to see the sunshine.”

CHAPTER III

MRS. CARROLL'S BOARDING-HOUSE

HOW glad I am that I know New York," Mildred thought through her tears, as she watched the familiar landscapes flit by the car window. "So many young girls, like me, starting out on a new career, arrive in the great city, which is totally unknown to them. Fortunately I know New York so well, that I go with half the battle conquered."

Then, after a long interval, she began to wonder how she was going to manage with so small a capital as the fifty dollars Mr. Carpenter had just put into her hands, she exclaimed inwardly: "Good heavens! Haven't I got a task to make this money go a long way?" Then she laughingly admitted to herself that "It's too much! It's altogether too much for my good. People who make their fortunes always arrive in New York with fifty cents in their pockets. I am afraid that such

wealth as mine will ruin my prospects!"

Mildred also considered herself fortunate in having a place to go. She had taken the precaution to write to a Mrs. Carroll, who kept a boarding-house on Lexington Avenue near Fortieth Street, where Mildred's French teacher, Madame Pinard, had lived for several years.

Naturally, Mrs. Carroll was only too pleased to reserve a room for Miss Ashton of *Wild Acres*, Long Island.

Not yet used to the ways and means of a restricted purse, Mildred, although encumbered only with her tightly-rolled and silver-handled umbrella, took a taxi-cab on her arrival at the Pennsylvania Station, giving the address, Lexington Avenue and Fortieth Street, to the driver.

"I suppose some people would consider this an extravagance," said Mildred; "but I shall feel less depressed if I arrive in this way."

Mrs. Carroll's was not a typical New York boarding-house; and the reason of this was that Mrs. Carroll, a "reduced" Southern lady, could never bring herself to acknowledge that she kept boarders. Mrs. Carroll always told old friends and new acquaintances that she

had "a few people—*nice* people—live with her, during the season, to help meet her expenses. Living in New York was so dear!" And these nice people she always referred to as "my guests."

The "guests" also deceived themselves with the pleasant fiction of living in a "home."

"Oh, come now, this isn't going to be so bad," Mildred tried to persuade herself as she sat in the dreary parlor waiting for Mrs. Carroll to come and receive her. But if any one had entered just then, he would have noticed that the lids of Mildred's big, brown eyes were slightly red.

Mrs. Carroll was evidently dressing for the occasion; and to Mrs. Carroll it was something of an occasion to welcome Miss Ashton into her "family." She only hoped that Miss Ashton would become a permanent "guest" for the season. As to the possibility of having Miss Ashton for an indefinite period Mrs. Carroll never dreamed; for of course, Mildred had not informed Mrs. Carroll of the renting of *Wild Acres*.

The room which during her occasional calls upon Madame Pinard, Mildred had regarded with such unconcern, now assumed a new as-

pect. It was to become a part of her background,—and for how long?

Mildred put the question to herself, and had to swallow heavily.

As she sat there waiting for Mrs. Carroll, the atmosphere of the room began to assert itself and the room seemed to say: "I am a boarding-house parlor. Every boarding-house parlor has something in common with every other boarding-house parlor; and we all have a nameless something that we make you feel if you sit in us long enough. We are all depressing! We glory in it!"

"Well, one thing," said Mildred to herself, "the room is fairly comfortable, even if it doesn't obey the strictest canons of art. Let's look around! First, the mantel-piece is unobjectionable, with that square black marble clock. Of course, *I* wouldn't have those colored grasses in those tall vases. They're awful! Nor would I ever, for one moment, have a gas log.—Oh, my beautiful, big, blazing logs at *Wild Acres*! Hush! No memories just now!—I abominate gas logs. This is a fairly good—no, it is a *very* good Bokhara rug. You wouldn't expect to find a rug like this in a boarding-house. Very much worn at the

corner farthest away, over which that big chair is so carefully placed. Ah! that explains the rug,—probably bought at auction,—cheap! Now for the chairs! What a jumble! Two big, high-backed, easy chairs covered with red plush! Three wicker,—no, *five* wicker chairs with *crétonne* cushions! A large rocking-chair! Why will they always have rocking-chairs in the boarding-house parlor? A big square sofa—also in red plush—in that dark corner! It looks suspiciously as if somebody slept on it at night! This sofa that I am sitting on is very comfortable; it is too small for a bed; and, besides, it is of such a shape that nobody could recline on it. Onyx table between the windows with two gilt chairs beside it! Sole concession to elegance! Vase of withered flowers! Why do people leave stale flowers about?

“‘Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.’”

Then an ornate cabinet in the other dark corner caught Mildred's eye. An elaborate series of shelves decorated its wide front, a mass of machine-made carving. Every one of these shelves contained a china, or a glass, ornament of some kind. Did it think in its as-

sertive dishonesty that it could deceive Mildred, or any one else as to its real mission in life? Never.

"I fear," said Mildred, "*that* is a folding-bed! But why do they consider it necessary to over-decorate it? What a nuisance it must be to take down all those ornaments every night,—and where do they put them? A cloud of cabinet by day, a pillow of bed by night!"

Next Mildred began to examine the pictures. "Oh, my goodness!" she exclaimed, "look at those three water-colors, in broad gold frames, each one half a yard square! Poppies! I never saw poppies of *that* shade! Hollyhocks! Red, pink and yellow amid a blurr of unnatural, green leaves! I wonder why they made the poppies so large and the hollyhocks so small? Last, a bunch of lilacs with a white kitten peeping through the blossoms! I wonder what's behind my back," and Mildred screwed herself around to see what was hanging over the sofa. "Oh, a very brown 'etching,' I suppose they call it, representing a wet meadow with tall grasses in the foreground, a large and very brown house in the background and behind it the setting sun.

The unknown artist has not only signed the picture, but has contributed a '*remarque*' on the margin! Valuable thing! Isn't *that* terrific? I have often wondered where such pictures that I have seen in department stores and cheap picture-shops go. Now I know,—boarding-houses! I suppose that is the deceased wife's husband; no, I mean the deceased husband of the wife over the mantel-piece! No, it couldn't be Mr. Carroll: it's too old. He is wearing a stock. Oh, he looks something like Henry Clay and something like John C. Calhoun! Possibly it is Mrs. Carroll's father. I believe she came from South Carolina and married a Virginian, or a Marylander, or something of that kind."

Mildred got up to look at the portrait. "Why!" she exclaimed aloud, "it is signed Thomas Sully! No wonder it's good!"

At this moment Mrs. Carroll appeared.

"I was just looking at this portrait, Mrs. Carroll," said Mildred, turning around as she heard Mrs. Carroll's step. "I've come, you see!"

"That is my father," said Mrs. Carroll, warmly shaking Mildred's outstretched hand, "Thomas Pickens Fairfield. I'm a Fairfield,

you know," she added proudly, "a Fairfield of *Tulip Hill*, Goose Creek."

Mildred did not know; but she politely feigned long acquaintance with the House of Fairfield.

"I'm mighty glad, Miss Ashton, that you are going to be with us this Winter. I think you will like my little family. We are very sociable here and I hope you will feel at home right away. I will have to give you a very small room; but you shall have a little gas stove, if you wish. Would you like to see your room now?"

"Yes, thank you, Mrs. Carroll," replied Mildred, following Mrs. Carroll up the carpeted stairs.

The backbone of Mrs. Carroll's income was derived from the second floor, which was occupied by two wealthy and exclusive Baltimore ladies. Their meals were served in their apartments and they made it a special principle of their lives not to see, nor to be seen by, any of the other inmates, if possible. The two floors above were cut up into a number of small rooms in which were lodged as varied an assortment of types as were gathered

on the top of the Quangle-Wangle's famous hat.

To one of these little rooms Mrs. Carroll conducted Mildred.

It was clean and neat, and that was all you could say for it. A water-color of the same school as those in the parlor—and which Mildred promptly decided to remove—was the sole decoration of the walls, which were hung with a very hideous paper representing sprawling green and brown roses. The little white iron bedstead, with a clean white spread and small pillow, made Mildred think, with a shudder, of hospitals. A narrow oak *chif-fonier* with a small, square looking-glass, and a cheap, cane rocking-chair took up nearly all the space that the bed had left. There was just a passage-way between. A clean dotted muslin curtain draped the very small window, longer than it was high, for this top floor was but a half-story. The carpet was brown.

“If there is anything that you would like to have, Miss Ashton, don't hesitate to ring for Saidee. She is not very efficient, but she is docile.” And with that Mrs. Carroll left,

coming back to add: "We dine here at six."

Mildred closed the door. She looked around. It was a little too much for Mildred. She fell on the bed and burst into tears.

CHAPTER IV.

BREAKING THE ICE

MILDRED was spared the pain of hearing a dinner-bell. Mrs. Carroll had never condescended to having a bell rung in her house, even if she was forced to keep boarders. The few "guests," who were in the habit of assembling in the parlor at a quarter to six, always heard Oscar, Mrs. Carroll's "colored boy" from Charleston, "pronounce dinner," as he designated the ceremony. The other "guests" had to consult their own watches and clocks. Hunger made some of them punctual; others straggled in from six to seven.

At first, Mildred was tempted to say that she had dined, for she shrank from initiation into the "family"; not because of timidity—she was used to people—but because she was exclusive and tenacious of her privacy. Her good sense, however, soon got the better of her inclination; and, realizing that if it were not

to-day it must be to-morrow, she decided to make the plunge.

As she was arranging her hair—her wealth of soft, brown hair streaked with golden threads—her little glass told her that her eyes would be improved by bathing them, unless she wished the other boarders to gossip about the tell-tale evidences of tears.

“They might think I am having some dreadful love-affair,” she said; “that will never do”; and Mildred, therefore, bathed her eyes violently. Then she put on one of her simplest afternoon dresses,—a silvery gray watered silk, with gray silk stockings and *suède* slippers to match, and clasped a string of little coral beads around her neck.

Looking once again in the mirror, she was glad to see that the effect of the tears had vanished; but she did not note that the exertion of dressing had given her a lovely color, which the gray dress set off most charmingly.

The other boarders did, however, for when she appeared it seemed to all that a *light* came into the dingy dining-room.

Mildred’s heart sank as she looked at the table. It was long and narrow, and the coarse table-cloth had seen cleaner days. Each plate

was accompanied by two knives, two forks, two spoons (one large and one small), a napkin in a ring and a little glass lighthouse of salt with a perforated top, silver-plated.

Mrs. Carroll, who was waiting at the door for Mildred, refrained from introducing her to the whole table as she had at first intended; for a quick look at her face made the landlady appreciate that this was a new and trying experience for Mildred. The boarders were all gathered together. They were particularly punctual this evening; for the report had circulated that there was to be a new and attractive arrival. Mrs. Carroll only introduced Mildred's right and left neighbors, Mr. Bernard Fogg and Mr. Charles J. Williams, and a lady opposite, Miss Cornelia Van Tassel.

Mr. Bernard Fogg was an Englishman of about thirty-five, whose energies were divided between professional ballad-singing and clicking at a typewriter; Mr. Charles J. Williams, was about twenty-five and a law-student at Columbia University; and Miss Van Tassel was one of the last remnants of an ancient Knickerbocker family.

Mrs. Carroll always served the soup. It was stewed oysters this evening. Oscar took

each plate as it was filled by Mrs. Carroll, carried it away and placed it in front of a "guest." Two oysters swam in the thin milky liquid of each plate.

"New arrival must be a favorite with the Missus," said Charlie Williams to himself, as he counted in Mildred's plate *seven* of the little knots of crustaceans.

Having removed the soup-plates, Oscar next came from the pantry bearing in each hand a thick white plate, on which was a small strip of beefsteak with a little gravy beside it. After he deposited these, he went back for more; and so on, until the whole table of twelve had been served. Saidee (Mildred inferred it was Saidee) followed in Oscar's wake with two large, round, vegetable dishes; one containing mashed potatoes, the other stewed tomatoes, very watery and unseasoned. Next, Oscar brought to each a plateful of fairly fresh lettuce with the French dressing already made, which Mildred thought excruciatingly acid. Saidee followed close behind with a long-shaped dish of sliced ham, which she offered to each in turn. Next, Oscar went from each to each with the burning question of "cabinet pudding, or stewed prunes?"

These delicacies were duly administered by himself and Saidee after the preferences had been collected. Coffee in small cups followed this course,—and the meal was ended!

“So this is dinner! Shall I ever adjust myself to this?” Mildred asked herself, as the guests scattered, some into the parlor to gossip and play cards; others, upstairs to get ready for the theatre; and others, to undress and spend the rest of the evening *en déshabillé* in their little cells.

The next few weeks Mildred spent in trying to get used to her new life. She decided not to notify her friends of her arrival in New York. She did not want to be “looked up.” She had the name of her country-place erased from her card-plate and simply wrote her address in pencil when she pleased to give it.

Mildred veiled her feelings so entirely that she was established in her first week at Mrs. Carroll’s as a universal favorite. Mrs. Carroll, who had taken Mildred to her heart upon her arrival, clasped her the more tightly when she learned that Miss Ashton’s grandmother was a Southerner. Everybody in the house followed Mrs. Carroll’s lead. It was a pleas-

ure to every one to see Mildred's fresh, young face, with its cheery smile, come into the dining-room in the early morning, when so many were sitting around the breakfast table in varying moods. Even Miss Van Tassel, who, during her residence here of five years had never been known to praise any one, paid Mildred a great compliment. She said "Miss Ashton reminds me so much of myself when I was her age." When this reached Mildred, she did not mind in the least. She made a point of calling sometimes after dinner in Miss Van Tassel's lonely little room to listen to memories of her long faded youth.

Oscar and Saidee would do anything on earth for Miss Ashton before she asked it, when they could anticipate her wants. Even the exclusive Baltimore ladies on the first floor, having encountered her one afternoon on the stairs, took a fancy to Mildred, and actually bowed. On the next chance meeting they gave her an invitation to call upon them. This unusual circumstance, circulated through the medium of Miss Van Tassel, supplied the whole house with a topic of conversation for a month.

Everybody was drawn to Mildred Ashton;

and the strange part of it was that she made no effort to bring it about.

She was sweet-tempered and vivacious; she was quick to observe and quick to feel; and, although she was excessively fastidious, she kept her criticisms to herself. What was the reason that everybody loved her?

Was it because she was honest with herself and with all the world? Was it because she was kind-hearted and never gave pain to any one, nor to anything? Was it because she was young and pretty? Or, was it because she unconsciously possessed something like "the Nelson touch" that characterized England's magnetic admiral, who charmed every one that came into his presence.

Yes; Mildred Ashton was a *luminous* person, shining by her own inward light; and she cast radiance around her wherever she appeared.

During the entire period of her stay at Mrs. Carroll's Mildred Ashton never mentioned her home, her possessions, her family, or her friends. Regarding her own changed conditions, she was naturally reticent.

Though intensely unhappy, she never appeared without a smile; and she never failed

to respond with a cordial manner to any one who addressed her in the same spirit. She had evidently taken the advice of the Sun-dial at *Wild Acres* to heart.

There was only one person in the house that Mildred cordially disliked; and that person was her right hand neighbor at the table, Bernard Fogg. If Mildred had been older and wiser, she would have simply ignored him. Mildred, however, could not tolerate Fogg's aggressive attitude towards America and Americans, and his sneering remarks. Exasperated to the breaking-point one evening after he had been slurring at New York throughout the entire dinner, Mildred told him, in a very contemptuous and haughty tone, that "as he was a guest in this country, it would be better taste if he would reserve his criticisms until he returned to his own superior land."

To this Fogg replied, talking on the edge of his lips, "It's not a metter of teeste; it's a metter of fict," and acted for the rest of the meal as if he were the Lord Chancellor of England sitting on the Woolsack.

Those who overheard this reproof were perfectly delighted with Mildred. The others, who were informed by Miss Van Tas-

sel immediately after dinner, kept their ears and eyes thereafter upon Mildred, so that they might not miss an opportunity of hearing and seeing a reduction of the much-disliked Fogg.

Fogg had been holding forth at his end of the table every evening ever since his advent there a year ago; and, as no one had questioned his *ex cathedrâ* remarks, he was in full command.

Mildred could not stand him; and, consequently, she defended her country and her countrymen to the best of her ability from the almost continuous attacks and criticisms of this pitiful product of the Anglo-Saxon race, who had come here for the very purpose of bettering his condition.

Fogg had arrived in New York with the intention (he was too cocksure to hope) of setting the Hudson on fire with his bass voice and singing of songs. So far, Fogg's talents had been wasted on unappreciative New York. He had a good voice; but he had no style and no musical culture. When he first talked to Mildred, she, disposed to take him at his own valuation, gathered from his colossal opinion of himself that he was a second Plunkett Greene, and said, encouragingly: "Why, yes,

Mr. Fogg, you ought to make a success with your English and Irish ballads; I want to hear you sing." As he continued the conversation, she was not surprised that he had failed to impress the managers upon whom he had called; for his portfolio of selections consisted chiefly of songs by Sterndale Bennett and Maude Valérie White, while Sullivan's *Lost Chord* was the one he always selected to sing in hopes of securing an engagement. Fogg, blaming New York for lack of appreciation, turned to his other gift,—that of working a typewriter; and, being fortunate enough to drop into the Cunard office one day when they were short of a typist, he persuaded the friend upon whom he was calling to put him in the vacant place. When the absent clerk returned, he found his position filled; for Fogg had no idea of giving up anything when he once got hold of it. Consequently, it was from a weekly envelope marked "Cunard" that Fogg drew the few dollars out of which he paid Mrs. Carroll her share every Saturday evening at half-past five on the stroke of the clock.

Meanwhile, the voice did not suffer. The boarders did. Through the influence of an

English organist, whom he had known at home, Fogg had rented a cheap upright piano (he called it a "cottage piano"), which had effected its entrance into the window of Mrs. Carroll's third floor hall-bedroom by means of an intricate arrangement of pullies, block and tackle and several layers of india rubber and woollen coverings for protection against many bumpings upon Mrs. Carroll's brown stone front. Its upward progress had been witnessed by all the neighbors and a pavement concourse of tenement children and loafers, who utterly ignored the big white word "Danger" conspicuously displayed during the ascent on a red block near the house. For half an hour, at least, the fascinated crowd had gazed upward to watch the bandaged instrument defiantly twirling in the air and obstinately dodging the window at the very moment the coaxing piano-movers thought they had it.

For Fogg, who had obtained permission to leave the office early so that he might superintend the moving, it was a new and thrilling spectacle. Was it not *his* piano?

The piano had been a great pleasure to Fogg. Seated before it, he warbled—if a bass

voice can be said to warble—every evening to his own accompaniments, which, at times he suddenly checked, in order to listen the better to the beauty of his vocalizations and his “great Ah-men!”

The admiration that Mr. Charles J. Williams felt for Mildred when he first saw her, passed all bounds on the day he heard her give her first slash at the conceited Britisher. Bernard F. was something so new to Williams that the latter hardly knew how to take him; and so, Williams had, like the other boarders, permitted the aggressive Fogg “to take the place.” Therefore, when Mildred began to reduce the swelling batrachian to something like normal proportions, Williams sat by speechless with awe, wonder and delight.

Fogg was as dense as his name. He could not see a joke; his mind knew no such thing as play. Never did a ripple of expression pass across his stolid features; never did a gleam issue from his round eyes that looked blankly out of heavily framed English eyeglasses held together by a great cross bar, which reminded Mildred of the handle bar of a bicycle.

On one occasion when he had been deliver-

ing a highly sententious lecture in regard to the position of the American Woman, viz. "that she had far too much liberty; that she dressed too well; that she had too much to say; and that she was too pampered in early youth by her parents," he turned to Mildred, saying impertinently, "Now you, Miss Ashton, for example. You ought to have had more discipline." At this moment the great moralist was about to lift his salt-cellar. Mildred quickly handed him hers, saying: "You had better take my Attic salt! You need it!"

The puzzled Fogg, looking at both salt-cellars, observed, "Really now I don't see any difference between them. What is it?"

Charlie Williams snickered. Mildred said nothing more; nor did she even smile.

Three weeks had now gone; and Mildred had accomplished nothing but the adjustment of herself to the conditions at Mrs. Carroll's. She had, however, read the weekly papers and the magazines to gain an idea of the subjects in which people were interested; attended several concerts; and visited a few picture-galleries and studios. She had kept a diary, jotting down suggestions for topics that might be of practical use. Moreover, she had tried to

write a little every day, hoping by this means to get into practice.

Three weeks had now gone. The ice had been broken. The next thing to do was to plunge into professional life.

CHAPTER V.

A BALTIMORE SUPPER

ONE day, a few weeks after Mildred had called upon the two Miss Swanns (they preferred this form of address rather than that of the Misses Swann), she was sitting in her little room repairing a velveteen skirt and thinking what a good thing it was for a woman to be efficient with her needle, when there was a knock at the door. When Mildred went to open it, she found the two Miss Swanns's colored maid, Cora, who said with a smile, showing all her large and even white teeth, "Miss Swann sent you this, and said I was to wait for an answer, pleasum."

The little note proved to be an invitation for Mildred to take supper with the two Miss Swanns on the following evening, if she had no other engagement. Mildred wrote a grateful acceptance and Cora, still smiling, went downstairs with it.

It was remarkable to see how much old

Maryland atmosphere these two Baltimore ladies had managed to bring into the second floor of Mrs. Carroll's boarding-house. Their suite, spreading over the entire floor, consisted of a drawing-room, two bedrooms, a bath-room and a small hall-room for Cora, whom they had brought from Baltimore. Cora attended to the rooms and waited on the two ladies, being so well-trained that she anticipated all their wants and needs. She practically received no orders, except for an occasional errand.

The two Miss Swanns had brought their furniture from Baltimore and the three fairly-sized rooms looked rather crowded with the handsome mahogany pieces. A big sofa, with a high square back, stood at right angles to the open fire that blazed upon heavy, brass and-irons with large balls. These, with the perforated fender, Cora was required to keep in a state of brilliant polish. A large and handsome rug nearly covered the dark blue felt carpet. Old-fashioned blue damask curtains, of a large floral pattern, hung at the two windows from heavy gilt cornices; and these curtains were looped back with thick ropes of blue silk ending in heavy blue tassels, showing

the thin, white embroidered curtains beneath. A long, narrow Sheraton mirror, in three sections, the gilt frame having delicate pilasters at the sides, ornamented the mantel-piece, on which stood a French clock of gilt bronze, representing Minerva, gracefully seated, her right arm resting on her shield in which the dial was placed. On either side were two handsome Chinese vases. Between the windows stood a gilded console table and from its white marble slab a long, narrow mirror, in a wide gilt frame, reached to the ceiling. On this slab was a tall, brass lamp with a bell-shaped ground glass globe, decorated with a floral pattern, below which dangled a fringe of crystal *girandoles*. Near it was a large and rare Chinese-Lowestoft bowl full of visiting-cards and invitations. A low, squat brass-lamp with its shade of blue silk, stood on the large round table in the centre of the room. The sofa and chairs were covered with blue damask, like the curtains, and two chairs, with open and carved backs, great spreading legs and ball-and-claw feet, had seats of Turkey-work. A low, round table at the side of the sofa supported an immense silver salver, with its massive silver tea-service. This, another

of Cora's cares, shone as brilliantly as it was possible to make silver shine; and, consequently, it vied with the andirons in catching and reflecting the light from the fire. There was a bookcase full of books; and there were two cabinets containing china, glass and silver. Several family portraits looked down upon these familiar objects in an unfamiliar place.

The whole room not only breathed a delightful air of refinement, but it was "old-fashioned" and charmingly home-like. It gave a faint suggestion of the home in which these typical Baltimore ladies had passed their lives. To Miss Hatty and Miss Jessie, as they were familiarly called by their Baltimore friends, it was a very feeble reminder of their beloved *Belvedere*, upon which Baltimore had gradually encroached until the old white mansion, with its columned portico and colonnades, had to be pulled down to make room for Swann Street, which had determined to go right through the old Swann property. This, happening about the time that Mrs. Carroll lost her husband and decided to open a boarding-house in New York, the two Miss Swanns (who were relatives of the late Mr.

Carroll) decided to leave "Balt'mer," with its sad memories and to take a floor with her. The thought of helping Mrs. Carroll also actuated their kind hearts, as well as the thought of personal convenience; and Mrs. Carroll felt deeply grateful for their support and their presence. So, altogether, it was a mutually pleasant and profitable arrangement.

Every summer, after wrapping, with the aid of Cora, the furniture, pictures, brass and china in linen and brown paper and sending their silver to the safe deposit, these ladies left the darkened room, with its heavy odor of camphor, and departed, with Cora, for a series of visits in Maryland. The late summer they spent travelling, and the first of October saw them back in the spot they now called home. They lived, however, in complete isolation from the other boarders.

When Mildred entered on the eventful evening the table was set for supper; and very pretty it looked, with the shining mahogany board, which had been waxed and oiled and rubbed by Cora until it shone like a mirror. It now exhibited a handsome lace centre-piece, lace mats, little embroidered tea-napkins, a pot of blooming *cyclamen* in the centre

and two silver candelabra with yellow shades. The large silver tea-service denoted Miss Hatty's place.

Mildred gave an admiring glance at the rich cut-glass tumblers, the heavy silver forks and spoons, the sharp and shining ivory-handled steel knives, and the Spode china with the wide gilt bands and decorative pink roses. She thought of *Wild Acres*.

She could not resist the temptation to speak of her own home in this sympathetic atmosphere.

"This looks so much like my own home!" she exclaimed as she took her seat.

Miss Jessie, astonished, raised her eyebrows, "Where is your home, Miss Ashton?"

"On Long Island," replied Mildred, "not very far away—Port Washington."

"I don't know where that is," said Miss Hatty; "is it anywhere near Oyster Bay, or Roslyn? We have cousins in both those places."

Mildred now had to give all the information she pleased about Port Washington and *Wild Acres*. The two Miss Swanns, amazed to learn that their guest belonged to the

"landed gentry," were aching to know more. Who was this Miss Ashton, anyway?

At this moment Cora entered, bringing a large tray with covered dishes.

"We are going to give you a real Maryland supper," said Miss Hatty, as Cora placed a large silver platter of fried chicken in front of Miss Jessie. "We talked over several things and we finally decided upon fried chicken."

"It looks delicious," said Mildred, eyeing the golden-brown chicken surrounded with a rim of squares of fried mush, also of a golden-brown color, and sprigs of parsley at intervals.

Mildred had never tasted such chicken, and said so.

"No," answered Miss Hatty, "I suppose not. I have eaten fried chicken in many places in New York; but not even in private homes do you get what we Maryland people consider fried chicken. We insist on having very young chickens and freshly killed chickens and we put them in cold water for a little while to draw the blood out and make them white. Oh, I should say that the chickens are properly carved and not hacked with an hatchet. Then we wipe the pieces very dry

on a clean cloth and have the frying lard very hot. That is all! Then the mush—oh, do give Miss Ashton another piece of mush, Jessie; these squares are so small to-night. The mush is another feature. That is also specially prepared, Miss Ashton. I'm so glad you like it. Then the cream sauce with *plenty* of parsley, the sauce not too *thick*, is still another secret that they haven't learned in this part of the world. Yes," continued Miss Hatty, cutting a piece off the wing on her plate and tasting it, "this is just right to-night. Don't you think so, Jessie?"

Miss Jessie agreed. It now became her turn to say as Cora handed to Mildred a cut-glass dish containing half a stuffed mango. "Miss Ashton, do try some of that mango; it's made from an old family recipe that we gave to one of our cousins, who makes it for us now—an old recipe of the Calverts, or the Talbots—I don't remember which. Which was it, Hatty, the Calverts, or the Talbots?"

"The Talbots, I believe," corrected Miss Hatty.

"Well, I never know which it is," said Miss Jessie, "I know we have both Calvert and Talbot recipes and I always get them confused.

We are related to both families, Miss Ashton."

Mildred also found the mango perfection, and said so.

"Will you have your tea now, or later?" asked Miss Hatty, who had, meanwhile, made the tea.

Mildred preferred it now; and Miss Hatty, having ascertained whether Mildred wanted cream, or lemon, or nothing, and the number of lumps of sugar, next directed her attention to the beaten biscuit.

"Those are *real* Maryland biscuit, Miss Ashton. Those were made especially for you. We don't often have them now: they are so difficult to make. You rarely see the real Maryland biscuit now, even in the old homes."

Mildred thought these delicious. The butter caused her to ask, "Where did this wonderful butter come from?"

"We have that sent to us regularly from Philadelphia," replied Miss Jessie. "We get it from the grandson of a Delaware man, who supplied my grandfather's table with butter for years and years."

"Cora, you haven't handed Miss Ashton the

tomatoes," said Miss Hatty, reprovingly to the bronze statue, who had become so interested in watching the effect the Maryland delicacies had upon the Northern guest, evidently fearing that the reputation of her native state was at stake, that she was perfectly oblivious to her duties. Thoroughly ashamed of her negligence, when called back to life, Cora quickly caught up the cut-glass dish containing large cart-wheels of coral-pink tomatoes, each decorated in the centre with a spoonful of thick, golden mayonnaise and handed it to Mildred, who, taking a slice, pronounced it delicious.

Cora, removing the remains of this course, brought in a dish of Spanish cream and a large perforated silver cake basket containing small sponge cakes, iced with white.

"I never could have imagined such food coming out of Mrs. Carroll's kitchen," thought Mildred. "It isn't much like our *table d'hôte* downstairs! It seems incredible." And then there came over her an awful feeling: she suspected who had cooked that delicious supper. The dainty and finished cooking and the delicious flavor that everything had could only be obtained through

the work of either a lady, or a *cordon bleu*; and the greatest stretch of Mildred's imagination could never bestow the title of *chef* upon Saidee.

This thought spoiled Mildred's enjoyment of her supper. She could not bear to think of Mrs. Carroll standing over the hot stove preparing these dainties. It was characteristic of Mildred Ashton that she never liked to enjoy anything at any one else's expense.

Still, as a guest, she had to be outwardly oblivious to the methods by which such culinary perfection had been obtained.

"This sponge cake is just like the kind we always have at my home," said Mildred, who noting a half incredulous look on Miss Hatty's face, added, "I've made it very often. You take the weight of the eggs in sugar and half the weight in flour; you beat the yolks up very lightly with the sugar and you beat the whites separately to a stiff froth; you add the whites to the yolks; then you add your flavoring; and then, after having sifted your flour two or three times, you stir that in; and then you bake it in a quick oven. Isn't that right, Miss Swann?"

"It certainly is," replied Miss Hatty, "but

that is an old Southern recipe. How did *you* get it?"

"Why, my grandmother was a Virginian," said Mildred.

Imagine the effect of this unexpected announcement upon the two Miss Swanns! They had indeed been entertaining an angel unawares! Their surprise, delight and exaltation knew no bounds.

"Who was your grandmother?" asked Miss Hatty, most interestedly.

"My grandmother," replied Mildred very quietly, "was a Lee."

"Really!" exclaimed the excited Miss Hatty.

"Why, of course," Miss Jessie spoke up quickly, as if she had known it all the time. "Of course, that's where she gets her name of Mildred. Mildred Lee! Don't you see?"

"Why, then if you are a Lee, you are related to all the Colonial families in Virginia and some in Maryland. Isn't this interesting, Jessie? Isn't this *most* interesting?"

"It certainly is," answered Miss Jessie. "Now we know where to place you."

"Oh," replied Mildred, "I'm very proud of my *Northern* blood. The Ashtons are just as

old a family as the Lees; and we are related to many of the old New York families. Moreover, the Ashtons took a very active part in the Revolution and in the Civil War. You must remember that I am a Yankee girl, too. I am both a Blue and a Gray."

"Are you a Daughter of the American Revolution?" asked Miss Hatty.

"No," replied Mildred, "nor a Colonial Dame either, though I have been asked to join both societies."

"Well, you ought to join both," said Miss Jessie. "I think we, Americans, ought to do everything we can to preserve our true old American spirit, the spirit of '76. There are so many races here now and so many communities and societies and religions, so many beliefs, traditions and ambitions, and so many different codes of ethics, that I think every true American man and woman should unite in the endeavor to preserve our race and our ideals. These patriotic societies do much in this way. My sister and I usually attend the annual meetings of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Washington. I wish you would go with us sometime, Miss Ashton."

"Perhaps I will," answered Mildred.
"Perhaps, I can write it up."

"We want you to go as our guest," Miss Hatty exclaimed, "from the moment you leave this house till you get back again; but there is no reason why you shouldn't write it up, if you want to when the time comes."

By this time Cora had removed all traces of supper and placed the lamp with the blue shade on the table with the books and magazines. No one would now have imagined that a meal had been served here.

Mildred tried to think which of the two Baltimore ladies she liked the better. First, she looked at Miss Hatty, a woman of about sixty-five, tall and slender, with fine figure and erect carriage, sitting so well in her arm-chair, her hands loosely clasped on her lap and her small foot in its gray satin and beaded slipper resting on the footstool. Mildred admired her finely-shaped head, with its wealth of dark auburn hair, slightly gray, parted in the middle, waving at the sides and gathered into a low coil at the neck,—an arrangement which brought out her calm and noble profile. Her dress was a soft gray *crêpe de chine* brightened with a corsage bouquet of scarlet

carnations. Her face, though not exactly handsome, was distinguished and proud; and Mildred thought her expression very sweet. Then she looked at Miss Jessie, who was several years younger than her sister. Miss Jessie was more animated than Miss Hatty. She was very small, very slight, very light of step—bird-like, in fact,—quick in her actions and very twittery in her talk. Her abundant light hair was worn high and rolled from her forehead, making her look taller than she was; and she had that fine high-bred line of neck that gives a peculiarly erect carriage to the head. Miss Jessie bore the traces of having been an unusually pretty woman and the coquettish little ways that still clung to her gave evidence that Miss Jessie Swann had been a belle—a real Baltimore belle! She wore her clothes beautifully; and, if there was any quality that was most conspicuous about her, it was her excessive daintiness.

Mildred observed her sitting in a low chair, her jeweled fingers occupied with some light needlework, and the firelight playing upon her fluffy heliotrope dress, with a bunch of violets at the waist; and she began to wonder what had been her history. Miss Jessie grew

upon Mildred as she studied her. She was so gentle, so responsive and so sweetly feminine that Mildred thought Mrs. Carroll's a poor setting for one who could have presided so gracefully and so well over a home of her own.

"I have heard that there is a young Englishman in the house, a Mr. Bernard Fogg," said Miss Hatty. "Do you know him, Miss Ashton?"

"Do I know him!" said Mildred contemptuously. "I should think I did! He sits next to me at the table."

"I like Englishmen," observed Miss Jessie, who owned a few scalps of this race, and thought of these trophies for the moment, a little sentimentally, "I like Englishmen."

"Well, you wouldn't like *this* one," Mildred exclaimed quickly. "You *wouldn't* know him."

"Why, what's the matter with him?" queried Miss Hatty, amused at Mildred's vehemence.

"Everything's the matter with him," replied Mildred; "he's perfectly horrid! He's so conceited, that I think he will burst, and he's so common! I don't see how anybody

can *dare* be so common as he is. I tell you what he is—he's a combination of Malvolio and Mr. Guppy. He is Shakespeare's Malvolio for conceit and he's Dickens' Guppy for ignorance and commonness; and I don't know how many other of Dickens' disagreeable people he is besides. Dickens would certainly have written him up, if he had seen him."

"Why don't you write him up?" asked Miss Jessie.

"I?" laughed Mildred. "Oh, I wouldn't spend that much time on him. What irritates me most about him," continued Mildred, "is that he is always slurring America and Americans. Nobody wants *his* opinion. He says we are very crude, and he says we are not at all musical. He's so qualified to speak! I can see very plainly by his manners that he is of the middle-middle class, if not the lower-middle class; and he has never seen any decent life in England. Then, with regard to music, he has heard absolutely nothing but concerts at the Crystal Palace! He thinks the Crystal Palace represents everything on earth. He can't get beyond the Crystal Palace. Now, for example, the other day I asked him if he had been to the Flower Show and what

do you think he replied? 'Nee-o,' " said Mildred, mimicking the voice, " 'nee-o, certinly not. I have seen the Flower Shows at the Crystal Pillis. Why should I trouble to go to innnything in New York?' But to return to the question of music, the only Wagner opera he ever heard, or heard of, is *Lohengrin* and the favorite songs in his own *répertoire* are *The Last Chord* and *In the Gloaming!* We aren't cultivated in America! Ugh! But it's long past the gloaming now," added Mildred; "I must go. I've had a most delightful evening."

"Oh, wait a minute," said Miss Jessie, rising and laying her needlework on the table, "you must have a glass of cherry brandy that our Baltimore cousins have just sent us"; and going to the little cellaret, Miss Jessie brought out a small decanter and three liqueur glasses, which she filled.

"Now," said Miss Hatty, "I think I will propose a toast. To a long friendship with Miss Mildred Ashton."

CHAPTER VI

A JOURNALISTIC NOVICE

MILDRED realized that she should not go empty-handed on her expedition into the newspaper world. The question was what should she write about?

Opening her Diary, she looked at her record for the past week.

"Oh," she exclaimed, as she noticed an entry: "Saw Mr. La Farge's lovely South Sea Pictures."

"There," she said, "that might do. Those charming pictures are still fresh in my mind. I'll write them up. It's an unusual subject."

The task was not quite so easy as she had imagined.

Mildred sat before her desk for a long time without achieving any results. Presently she said to herself, "I believe I will pretend I am writing a letter to some one and trying to describe these pictures so that my friend can see them as I saw them."

This gave her a start. Mildred soon became so absorbed in her subject that she worked away entirely forgetting the dinner-hour, until Saidee appeared, sent by Mrs. Carroll to inquire if Miss Ashton were ill and wanted anything served in her room.

First, Mildred paid a short tribute to the genius of Mr. La Farge. Then she passed on to his studies of groves of breadfruit and coconut trees; studies of tall, waving palms with their slender and fantastically twisted trunks; studies of the grass huts thatched with *pandanus* leaves, around which natives were sitting draped in their bright *tapa* cloths and wearing garlands of bright flowers upon their heads and bare breasts; studies of dense forests and jungles; glimpses of green and distant coral reefs over a tossing sea of sapphire; great black basalt *tors* rising out of perpendicular purple islands touched with the rich light of a tropical dawn; studies of active volcanoes down whose flanks rushed streams of glowing lava; studies of gentle islets dreaming in the moonlight; notes of pools and dim grottoes seen through gnarled branches and trailing vines; and studies of the beach and sea at all hours of the day and night and under all at-

mospheric conditions. She also dwelt upon the representation of the natives—the Marquesas—strolling through the groves of mimosa, coco-palm and acacia, with their peculiar graceful and languid glide, or bathing, or carrying canoes, or taking the waves in their native boats, or sitting motionless and impassive as sphinxes before their huts. Then she mentioned particularly a *himene*, where a group of natives were sitting in a circle on the greensward, singing their native hymns, while the moon, slipping through dark, grotesque clouds, touched the deep, blue waves here and there with silvery light as they broke upon the distant beach.

The next day, Mildred copied her little essay as legibly and as neatly as she could, knowing by instinct that a manuscript has a better chance if it is attractively presented. Then she dressed herself in a simple tailor suit of black broadcloth, placed her little black velvet *toque* at the correct angle, and pinned a black dotted veil around it, threw her black fur boa around her neck, drew on her thick, white gloves with heavy black stitching and picked up her black muff. Her only touch of color was a stiff scarlet wing in her hat.

The small silver net coin-purse that she carried in her muff held her last fifty cents.

"I feel like a knight-errant starting forth on adventures with an unblazoned shield," she thought as she closed Mrs. Carroll's door behind her.

Reaching the busy newspaper district, Mildred walked down Nassau Street and Park Row, wondering which of the offices she would select for her first call.

She looked at the list of papers that she had made with the names of their respective editors. Although she scanned it again and again, it told her nothing of the personality of these men, nor what kind of a reception she was likely to meet with.

"I'll try the *New York Comet*," she finally decided, "and Mr. Crowfoot Crane, principally because it publishes one of the largest Sunday supplements. They must need a great deal of material to keep it going."

On entering the office of the *New York Comet*, her way was blocked by a balustrade with a swinging gate in the centre, guarded by a one-headed Cerberus, who held out a pad of little slips, printed with

"Whom do you want to see? State business."

A convenient pencil dangled from the pad, by a string.

To the first question Mildred wrote: "Mr. Crowfoot Crane," and to the second "Contributions."

"I wonder how I thought of that word," she said to herself, quite pleased with its business-like sound.

The boy tore off the slip and disappeared. In a few moments he returned with "This way." He conducted her to an elevator already jammed with people. It was just about to ascend, but waited to take on the proverbial one more; and the one more this time happened to be Mildred. Cerberus called back to her, "Sixteenth floor, Room one six four four."

Walking along the corridor, Mildred soon found the door with the square ground glass pane, bearing the legend:

"Room 1644. Sunday Editor.
MR. CROWFOOT CRANE."

After first knocking gently on the pane and receiving no response, Mildred decided to

open it. She entered a small, square room, in which four young women were tapping away industriously upon their type-writers.

"I want to see Mr. Crowfoot Crane," said Mildred, politely handing her visiting-card to the girl with the pleasantest face.

The girl, to Mildred's astonishment, scorned the card, but condescended to say, "Take a seat!"

Presently she returned to announce: "Mr. Crane will see you in half an hour. He is very busy!"

Mildred entertained herself by walking to the window and looking at the wonderful picture below her of lower New York,—the threads of streets between the "sky-scrapers," through which miniature people and vehicles were moving rapidly; the tiny snake-like trains running along the elevated railways; and the shining river with its busy craft. She became so interested in watching an ocean steamer making its rapid way towards the Narrows and leaving a long trail of smoke behind that the half-hour, therefore, seemed short; and she was even surprised when the girl came to her side, saying, "Mr. Crane will see you now."

When Mildred's glance fell on Mr. Crowfoot Crane, who, seated at his desk, made no motion save to turn his steel-blue searchlight eyes upon her, she longed for a benignant, warm iceberg to sail suddenly into the room and raise the temperature.

Mr. Crane waited for her to speak, to explain her intrusion.

"Mr. Crane?" questioned Mildred, pleasantly, with a rising inflexion, as an opening conversational wedge.

Mr. Crane's long, thin lips were tightly clamped; but Mr. Crane's steel-blue eyes said very plainly: "You know well enough who I am. That's an idiotic question."

Pause,—an awkward pause!

"I called to see—I have brought you," Mildred began again timidly, "er—er."

Mr. Crane lifted his scanty eyebrows; but his long, thin lips never moved.

"A manuscript," faltered Mildred, beginning to feel like Edward Lear's

"Old man of Cape Horn,
Who wished he had never been born."

Mr. Crowfoot Crane's long, thin lips never moved.

Mildred began to wonder if she were trying to talk to a marble image.

"I should like," she continued, "to write—er—er—errurr—to write for the—errurr—the—er—*New York Comet*."

Mr. Crane's steel-blue eyes seemed to say: "That sentiment is shared by countless thousands. Everybody wants to write for the *Comet*. Another idiotic remark!"

"I have just been to see Mr. John La Farge's 'South Sea Pictures.'"

A faint wave of interest passed over Crane's marble features; Crane's long, thin nose sniffed a possible story; and Crane's long, thin lips asked: "Is that a manuscript that you have there?"

It was Mildred's turn to have an opinion regarding idiotic remarks, but she would rather have impaled herself on Mr. Crane's mighty editorial pen than to have revealed any criticism; and so, she very apologetically confessed that it was.

He took the manuscript coldly from Mildred; looked quickly at the number of pages to gauge the number of words; and then glanced rapidly through it to taste its quality.

Mildred, her heart beating very fast, for

his unsympathetic manner had called forth everything that was sensitive in her nature, watched him tensely; and, although quivering, struggled with herself to maintain a calm exterior.

"*We* can't use *this*," he said presently, handing the sheets back to her with a contemptuous gesture that revealed his disgust, even more than the tone of his voice and the sneer on his face. He made it very evident that he wanted to get rid of the worthless manuscript as quickly as possible.

Mildred did not know what to make of such discourtesy. She hardly knew how to take her departure. Moreover, she was trembling.

At that moment the Great Man in the Editorial Chair seemed to have become an impersonation of Osiris and the despised offering she had made to the implacable god seemed to turn from a manuscript into her own shivering, quivering soul, which he had weighed in the balance and found wanting.

"I'll have to buy a microscope to hand to the next editor I call upon so that he can see me," Mildred admitted to herself, smiling inwardly; for she felt the humor of the situa-

tion, although she was terribly annoyed that she could allow any one to humiliate her so intensely.

"I'll never come here again," her proud spirit resolved, "if I starve to death."

As she rose, Osiris opened his thin lips to say: "La Farge is a good name. Now if you could bring me a little story—say, a couple of sticks—on a day with John La Farge at Coney Island—"

Mildred gasped.

"Or," he continued, not noting her look of surprise and horror, "what he used to eat for breakfast, why, I might—I don't say I would, for I don't know yet if you can write—I might—"

Mildred interrupted, with

"Good afternoon, Mr. Crane."

The Great Man, amazed at her tone and manner, looked up, but said nothing. Still keeping his seat, he began to write violently, while Mildred pushed open the heavy door.

As she walked through the ante-room she was perfectly certain that the four typists, who looked at her critically as she passed them, knew that her call had been unsuccessful. The rapid clicks of their machines

seemed to her ears sarcastic and gleeful comments upon her failure.

Mildred was quite faint when she reached the elevator, which took her down the sixteen floors with a sudden and terrific drop, not calculated to restore her heart-beats and her breath.

"I shall have to go home, now," she thought. "I can't go through such another ordeal." Then, as she walked along Nassau Street to take the Fourth Avenue car, the fresh air revived her a little; and, with new courage, she said to herself: "It will be just the same tomorrow. I've got to go through with this. I *must* try to get a start somewhere. No interview can last forever; and, at least, I have acquired some experience. I can never find anything more forbidding than Crowfoot Crane."

Some newsboys calling out "*Evening Argus!* Last Edition! Last Sporting Edition! *Evening Argus! Argus! Argus! Argus! Argus!*" decided her. As she happened to be in front of this office, she concluded to try her luck here.

The *Argus* dwelt in an unpretentious building. The *Argus* thought so highly of itself

that it took pride in its somewhat shabby home.

Here, Mildred encountered no form. She soon found herself at the top of the two flights of stairs without any guidance. She stopped a boy, who was hurrying by with a bundle of proofs, to ask: "Where can I find the Sunday Editor?"

"Mr. Bancroft?" he replied. "There," pointing with his right thumb backwards to a neighboring room.

The Sunday Editor, a gray-eyed, tall man of about fifty, rose from his desk as Mildred entered; and, taking the visiting-card from her hand, glanced at it and asked kindly:

"What can I do for you, Miss Ashton?"

Mildred's heart gave a sudden leap, as she rejoiced to herself "All newspaper editors are not Crowfoot Cranes!"

Mr. Bancroft, for that was the name of this editor, looked quickly through the manuscript and said: "I may be able to use this in next Sunday's Supplement."

"Oh, how very kind of you!" exclaimed Mildred, and, after a pause, added laughingly: "Now, Mr. Bancroft, I am going to work the willing horse to death."

Mr. Bancroft smiled.

"One good turn," she continued airily, "deserves another. Could I bring you anything more?"

"Why, yes," replied Mr. Bancroft, encouragingly. "Come in next Tuesday with a suggestion for a special Sunday article; or, if you have anything written, bring it down Wednesday. We make up on Thursday. After Wednesday will be too late."

"Thank you," said the grateful Mildred. "I've one or two articles that I will bring you next Wednesday. Shall I call about this time?"

"Any time between one and midnight," said Bancroft, rising; "those are my hours."

This was the beginning of quite a little journalistic experience for Mildred. During the rest of the winter and through the spring and summer she appeared every Tuesday, or Wednesday, at the *Argus* with a special article, or a topic to discuss with Mr. Bancroft for treatment, if he accepted it. Occasionally, too, Mr. Bancroft gave her an assignment of a more journalistic character than her own suggestions, though he seemed hard pressed often times to find a suitable subject to give her.

CHAPTER VII

A SUNDAY SPECIAL

ONE Wednesday afternoon in August, when the city was enveloped in a moist haze of heat and a steaming air rose from the hot pavements, Mildred started on her weekly call upon Mr. Bancroft.

Refreshed by the breeze created by the open car on its passage down town, Mildred jumped out lightly; and tripping into Park Row, slipped through the surging sea of people and quietly into the side door of the *Daily Argus*. She walked up the two long flights of stairs, not overly clean, and on the first landing passed the long room in which a dozen or more reporters, young and old, were writing furiously at their desks. Although it was but three o'clock in the afternoon, the lights were lit and their green shades, bent low over these desks, gave a half solemn quality to the dark room, in which nothing was heard but the scratching of pens and the whirr of

the electric fan that was doing its best to cool the stifling atmosphere. At the one window in the distance the City Editor, his desk piled with proofs, manuscripts, letters and various editions of the *Daily Argus*, which were served to him every few minutes, sat talking to a visitor and a "printer's devil" at the same time. The whole room had that peculiar smell of damp paper and ink, which every one who calls in a newspaper office for the first time notices, even if he does not possess "a nose for news."

As Mildred went by the open door, several reporters stopped writing to look up; and no wonder, for she was a most refreshing apparition. The young man who was editing a bunch of paragraphs on "Feminine Fashions" for the Sunday paper added promptly that "the most correct costume for the days ruled by Sirius is a suit of light blue linen, topped with a small blue straw hat garnished with pale yellow roses, and rendered very smart by the addition of long yellow gloves and black patent leather Oxford ties"; and he "tipped a wink" to the lightning sketch artist.

Mildred was fanning as she walked along and her eyes took in the scene mechanically.

She did not notice, however, that the men noticed her, her one idea being her business errand. One man she had to heed,—a young reporter who, with his hat hastily jammed on his head sideways, compelled her to stand aside to allow him to dash down the stairway, three steps at a time. He was evidently off on a sudden rush assignment; and at such a rate of speed he would certainly overtake it, whatever it was.

Arriving at the top, Mildred walked to the room of the Sunday Editor. The door was open, although no one was sitting at either of the two desks in this dismal den, whose windows, overshadowed by sky-scrapers, were further darkened with cobwebs.

Mildred, knowing from experience that the man she sought would soon appear—as his hours were from one o'clock to midnight—sat down in the bent-wood chair at the side of the larger desk to await the Sunday Editor's arrival.

"How do you do, Mr. Bancroft?" said Mildred, slightly rising as the latter entered, and holding out her hand. "Isn't it dreadfully warm?"

"Warm? Are you warm?" he asked.

"You don't look it. You look delightfully cool." Then, after a short pause, "Well, what have you got to suggest for next Sunday?"

"Oh," replied Mildred, "*nothing*. I can't think of a single thing. I have been racking my brains all day. It's *your* turn to suggest something to me."

The gray-haired man smiled. "I wish you had brought me something," he said, regretfully, "I'd publish it." Then, in quite another tone of voice, "Have a banana?" and he opened a paper bag that was lying on his desk and held out a bunch containing six bananas to Mildred.

Mildred laughed good-naturedly at this simple offering. "Thank you," she said, as she broke one off the bunch.

Mr. Bancroft also took one, stripped the peel off quickly and began to eat it before Mildred had broken the skin of hers.

Mr. Bancroft did not notice her amusement. He was turning over something in his mind. The bananas had helped him gain time and had created a more social atmosphere.

"I am sorry," he repeated, "that you haven't

brought me something. I haven't any ideas either." Then Mr. Bancroft paused, cleared his throat, lit a cigarette, took two puffs at it contemplating the smoke, and slung his left leg over the arm of his editorial chair. Then looking at her straight in the face, "Miss Ashton," he said, "I can't give you an assignment. Moreover, I don't intend to give you any more assignments."

Mildred looked astonished: "Why, Mr. Bancroft, I thought you liked my articles. Haven't I given you good work? I'm awfully sorry if—"

"Oh, no," he interrupted, "that's not it at all. It's quite another matter. You see," he continued, "in a newspaper we want,—well, we want *snappy* things. We want all kinds of things that *you* can't do—"

"I can learn, can't I?" interrupted Mildred.

"That's not it," replied the discomfited Bancroft. "That's not it. You can't get for us what we want. We—"

Mildred broke into his sentence again: "Why don't you tell me then—make it clear to me? I've got sufficient intelligence to do what others can do, haven't I?"

"There is no trouble about your intelli-

gence," replied the Sunday Editor, getting more and more puzzled how to explain the matter. "Have another banana?"

"No, thank you," said Mildred.

"Oh, hang it," cried Bancroft, throwing away his cigarette, "Miss Ashton, you shouldn't be knocking about in newspaper offices. The fact is, pardon me, Miss Ashton, but you are a kind of girl that has no business doing newspaper work. I can't give you assignments for the kind of material we want for the *Daily Argus*. There are lots of us who can go to all sorts of places and see all sorts of people; but you are not the kind for that work. I have made up my mind that I am not going to give you assignments for newspaper work. I am not going to give you any more. *There!*"

"But what can I do?" asked Mildred, quite petrified with astonishment and full of gratitude for his unexpected chivalry, though awkwardly expressed and punctuated with bananas.

"Write books," he said, calmly lighting a fresh cigarette; "get in with the publishers and keep away from the newspaper business. It's not your line."

"That's very kind of you, Mr. Bancroft," replied Mildred, "and I appreciate it very much, very much indeed; but, in the meantime, I must have some money. I *must* have something in next Sunday's paper. I really must. It's imperative. If you could see what is in—or, rather, what isn't in—my purse," holding her little coin purse before him, "you'd think so, too."

"Well," said Mr. Bancroft, weakening, "then let's see what we can do; but remember this is positively the last assignment you get from *me*."

With that, Mr. Bancroft picked up the morning paper which was lying on his desk, and looked through it hastily in search of a suggestion that might fit the occasion. "I can't see a d— (he checked himself) *blessed* (with emphasis) thing to give you. There is not a soul in town for you to interview. We might get a good 'special' that way, if there were any first-class singers, or actresses, in town. It's no use, I won't send you to interview any men. Oh," he said suddenly, his rapid eye catching something in the amusement column, "how would you like to interview the Human Fly?"

"Anything you please," Mildred replied, unconcernedly. "I don't care." Then with a bright smile: "What is the Human Fly, Mr. Bancroft?"

"The Human Fly, Miss Ashton," said the Sunday Editor, dryly, "is a certain lady who walks on the ceiling at Blake's Pleasure Palace every afternoon and evening. I should like—say about a column of chatty talk with her. How she does it?—If she is frightened?—How she learned to do it?—How she ever thought of walking upside down?—You know the kind of thing I want. Give me a little pen-portrait of her; and if she has an assistant, mention *that*. Chatty stuff—easy—nice reading—you know what I mean."

"Yes; I think I understand," said Mildred.

"By the way, Miss Ashton," asked Mr. Bancroft, stung by a sudden thought, "were you ever in a music-hall?"

"No, never in my life, Mr. Bancroft," replied Mildred.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Bancroft. "Then I will have to give you a—a—" he laughed, "a *chaperon*! I say, Clapp," he called to the next room, "come here a minute."

Enter Clapp.

Mildred looked up to see a medium-sized slender man of about thirty-five, with light moustache, blue eyes and the marks of several sabre cuts on his left cheek. He was dressed in a light summer suit of gray with dark red necktie and tan shoes. Owing to the heat, he wore no waistcoat. On his finger was a gold seal ring with a coat-of-arms.

"Clapp," said the Sunday Editor, "I want to introduce you to Miss Ashton. Now, Clapp, I want you to take Miss Ashton up to Blake's Pleasure Palace. She's going to interview the Human Fly for the Sunday paper, and I want you to take care of her. Miss Ashton has never been inside of a music-hall."

Clapp's bow to Mildred told her at once that he was something better than the ordinary reporter.

"I shall be delighted," Clapp said, both to his chief and to Miss Ashton; and, then, turning to the latter, "Shall we start at once? I will be ready in a moment."

"Yes," said Mildred, "I am ready."

As Clapp returned with his Panama hat bent in the latest style, Bancroft said: "By the

way, Clapp, have you carfare and money for the tickets?"

"Oh, plenty," replied Clapp, his face beaming with delight at such a pleasant interruption from the afternoon's routine.

"Now, Miss Ashton," said Bancroft, turning to Mildred and smiling, "you see how impossible you are. I give you an assignment and I have to send some one to take care of you. Don't you think it would be more economical for the paper to give it to Mr. Clapp in the first place?"

"Yes; I think it would," agreed Mildred, laughingly. "Good-bye, Mr. Bancroft. We are off to catch the Human Fly! I am terribly excited. I am crazy now to see what she is like."

"Remember this is your last assignment," called out Bancroft to the retreating figure.

Mildred returned to the door: "You shouldn't tell me that, Mr. Bancroft. I might send you a poor article."

"There's no fear of that, Miss Ashton," replied Bancroft, picking up a large batch of proofs.

Bancroft continued to read his proofs until

late in the evening. It took him longer than usual; for on the wide margins he saw a series of pictures of a slender girl dressed in light blue, with artless face and unconscious manner.

CHAPTER VIII

BLAKE'S PLEASURE PALACE

“WE had best take the subway, unless you object,” said Clapp, as they reached the street and he passed quickly behind Mildred to the outside.

Fortunately, they caught the express and were soon at Times Square. From there half a minute brought them to Blake's Pleasure Palace, where a huge poster representing Mademoiselle Aimée, the Human Fly, walking on the ceiling, was so conspicuously placed that it overshadowed all the other attractions.

“I think, Miss Ashton,” observed Clapp, after he had bought the tickets, “from what information I was able to gather, that the Human Fly does her stunt in about half an hour. We shall have to take a table and order some beer. Will you mind?”

“Not at all,” replied Mildred, who betrayed her lack of sympathy with the scene

the moment they entered the door and her musical ears were greeted with the high-pitched nasal notes of a typical English music-hall singer, with his horrible, flattened vowels.

The stage was set with a tropical scene. Palm-trees, waving their long leaves in an artificial breeze, stood out boldly against a moonlight background, where green waves were occasionally breaking in white foam upon a yellow beach. More boldly than the palm-trees stood out a group of ballet-girls, in short, frilly, diaphanous skirts of pink and green gauze, who were dancing with some very black Polynesians, in scarlet loin cloths and wearing wide silver bracelets and anklets. These incongruous dancers had just been introduced by a kindly disposed, though greatly emaciated, missionary, who sat on a camp-stool in the foreground watching the ballet until rapture compelled him to burst into song.

It was while he was imparting his enthusiasm to the delighted audience that Clapp and Mildred entered.

Mildred gave one glance at the stage and took her seat at the little round table indicated by Clapp, carefully turning her back upon

Polynesia, and not so much as deigning to look around at the neighboring tables, where men and women were drinking and smoking as they looked at the stage and listened to the music.

As soon as the beer arrived, Clapp drank his, and rising, said: "Miss Ashton, if you will excuse me, I will go behind the scenes and invite the Human Fly and her sister to join us in a glass of beer. That will be the best way for you to get your 'story.' "

In about ten minutes after he had left, Polynesia, which had been flooded with every colored light imaginable, perished in a considerate conflagration, which cleared the stage for the stars of the afternoon,—the Sinclair Sisters.

The noisy orchestra now changed its wild rhythms for some sentimental strains and then burst into a march as the Sinclair Sisters appeared to make their bows to welcoming applause.

Mildred was now compelled to look at the stage. She saw two well-featured women of graceful figure in rose-colored tights and white bodices trimmed with bunches of rose-colored ribbons here and there and their hair

very beautifully arranged by a competent hair-dresser.

Mildred had noticed soon after she had seated herself that there was a little decorated pavilion not far from her seat quite high up in the air, and at some distance from it, also high in the air, there was a sort of perch. Into the pavilion climbed Mademoiselle Aimée and into the perch climbed Mademoiselle Rose. After each had practised a few fancy tricks, such as turning upside down and swinging by the heels, Mademoiselle Rose suddenly called out "All right" and away darted Mademoiselle Aimée through the air to clasp the outstretched hands of Mademoiselle Rose, who was waiting to receive her projectile sister, hanging by her heels with her head and arms dangling downwards. Hand in hand they swung for a few minutes until Mademoiselle Aimée gave a dexterous wiggle and freed herself without disturbing the composure of the wonderfully self-poised Mademoiselle Rose, and sprang back to her pavilion.

After this double act was finished the sisters retired. In a few moments Mademoiselle Aimée returned, this time with the addition

to her costume of suction shoes, shaped like the pad of a fly's foot. Mounting a ladder, she soon reached the ceiling, upon which she slowly walked the whole length of the room, her head hanging downwards.

Applause!

The Human Fly had finished her afternoon's performance.

Mr. Clapp encouraged Mildred by: "They will soon be here now. Just as soon as they have changed their clothes."

In an incredibly short time the two sisters appeared. Mr. Clapp, rising, introduced them to Miss Ashton; and beckoning to a waiter, ordered "Four beers."

Mildred was surprised at the quiet manners and dress of these "circus girls," who naturally attracted much attention from the occupants of the neighboring tables. It was a new experience for Mildred to come into contact with people of a world so widely separated from hers.

It also astonished her to see how different the Sinclair Sisters now were, for on the trapeze they had looked almost like twins. Mademoiselle Rose was very dark, with black hair and black eyes—Spanish eyes, full of fire and light

—and her pale complexion gave a melancholy quality to her features. In short, Mademoiselle Rose was quite a romantic type. She was dressed in a gown of black and white checked silk, trimmed with black lace and a white leghorn hat was dented becomingly about her face and trimmed with large purple flowers. She wore gray gloves and carried a lace parasol.

The Human Fly was fair. She had light hair and a merry face. Her gown was of blue gray cloth and a profusion of scarlet plumes waved upon her large red hat.

The "circus girls" were greatly surprised at Mildred. Evidently "the lidy" (they were English girls and spoke with an East End accent), who was going to write them up for one of the big New York "pypers," was different from what they had expected to see. So they were shy and quiet.

As the four sat drinking their beer, Mildred asked a few questions, and Mr. Clapp, following her lead, asked others that brought out some details from the reticent girls. For instance, that they thought this trapeze too low; for the higher they were in the air, the better they could work. "Besides," added Made-

moiselle Rose, "we are afraid we might fall on some of the people and hurt them."

Mildred noted with surprise that this was said with a delightful nonchalance, as if there was not the slightest possible chance of injury to themselves in such a catastrophe.

"We made two mistakes to-day," added the Human Fly; "the lights were not properly arranged and they blinded us. Oh, no! We never change our positions. We couldn't do that. Each is trained to do her especial part. My sister does the catching and I do the flight."

"We have to practice every day for several hours," explained Mademoiselle Rose, "and we try new things then. We go to see all the acrobats and then we come home and try to copy them. We can't do all that the men do; but we try everything, and we get a great deal through perseverance."

"It isn't as easy to walk on the ceiling as it used to be," said the Human Fly. "I am getting so much stouter and my weight is against me. I have been walking on the ceiling ever since I was eight years old. First, I tried walking on tables. Then I went gradually higher and higher. It made me frightfully

dizzy at first. I sometimes strain a muscle. I did yesterday, and that is why I couldn't walk well to-day."

Soon the beer was gone and the conversation likewise. The Human Fly and her sister, delighted that the interview had terminated, rose and said good-bye, thanking Mr. Clapp for the beer and shaking hands with Mildred.

"Have you got any copy?" Mr. Clapp asked Mildred, as the girls departed.

"Oh, yes," replied Mildred emphatically.

"Do you want to stay any longer?"

"Oh, no, thank you," more emphatically.

"Then, let us go."

Mildred was glad to feel the fresh air again after the hot music-hall with its stale smoke. It was still stifling outside; the humidity was high. Mildred, tired and bored, was anxious to go home and rest.

"Where do you live, Miss Ashton?" asked Clapp.

"Lexington Avenue and Fortieth Street."

"May I accompany you?"

"Certainly, if you wish."

"Suppose we take the Broadway car and get the air,"

"That's a good idea," Mildred acquiesced.

Joe Clapp thought Mildred very delightful. She was a good listener and he soon found himself telling her something of his life of adventure; the many places he had travelled; and how he had received his education first at Columbia and then at Bonn. This led to a long description of the duel with a German student, which had left its record on his cheek. This was new to Mildred; she had never seen a slashed student before, and was consequently interested with a detailed account of the farcical performance.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Clapp," said Mildred, as they reached Mrs. Carroll's, "for going with me. We've had quite a lark, haven't we?"

"I enjoyed it," said Clapp. "Miss Ashton, may I call and take you to the theatre some evening? I always have tickets from the *Argus*."

"Thank you," said Mildred. "I am very fond of the theatre."

CHAPTER IX

A HOUSE OF CARDS

MILDRED was terribly worried that Mr. Bancroft had cut her off from the weekly story in the Sunday *Argus*. It is true that the remuneration was small. She averaged only fifteen dollars, but this, at least, paid her weekly expenses at Mrs. Carroll's. She was worried to think of that source of income being suddenly cut off.

What should she try for in its place? Life looked hard at this moment. Obligations must be met. Worse still, obligations must be incurred.

It was depressing to have a sudden check like this, when she had hoped for so much from the *Argus*. Mildred had had vague visions of working into an editorial position. She also had hopes of becoming musical critic of the *Argus*. Perhaps, indeed, the *Argus* might be so pleased with her work (she in-

tended to do so much and such varied work), that eventually it might send her to Europe. In what capacity Mildred did not quite know. Her mind had not worked out matters as far as that. She vaguely dreamed of being sent to Europe to represent the paper. In that case, she would be free from all worry about money and she would have delightful experiences. She could take social introductions; and, in her youthful pride, she thought these would, in some way, benefit the *Argus*. Yes; it had all looked so easy. Her future was assured. Industry and determination would bring it all about. And now, Mr. Bancroft had, with one breath, blown away her house of cards.

Mildred was puzzled. Long she sat in her chair in front of the little desk that Mrs. Carroll had found in the hidden depths of the house and placed in Mildred's room for her convenience. People liked to do things for Mildred. She was always so pleased and grateful.

Mildred had thanked her most appreciatively, although the contrast was great between this little wobbly desk with tooth-pick legs and her own beautiful mahogany *écrivitoire* at *Wild Acres*, lined with satin-wood and or-

namented with splendid wing-shaped brass handles and key-plates.

Mildred could not think of *Wild Acres*. She had to put all thoughts of her dear old home aside.

It was clear—growing clearer every day as the blank future stared at her in the face—that she must make a new connection. “I’ll try the magazines,” she said. “Yes; I’ll try the magazines. Now, I wonder what I can send out.”

She drew from her pigeon-holes a few poems that she had written from time to time. Some of them were sentimental effusions of her youth, at which her lip curled scornfully as she read them over; she smiled a little at several parodies and other humorous verses; but decided that none of these would impress an editor. Then she looked at her more recent work.

“One of these might do,” she said cheerfully, opening a package labelled “Translations of French Poems.” “I’ll try one of these on *Murray’s Magazine*.”

Having placed them in a large envelope, she addressed another envelope to herself,

stamped it and folded it to fit into the larger envelope. Then she wrote:

AUG. 12, 1911.

To the Editor Murray's Magazine.

Messrs. Murray, Hodge and Company,
New York City.

DEAR SIR: I am sending you a translation that I have just made of a *chanson* by Victor Hugo, hoping that it may be worthy of a place in your magazine.

Faithfully yours,

MILDRED ASHTON.

P. S. I enclose the original, so that you may see that I have followed the words and the sentiment as closely as possible.

M. A.

"That is not strictly true," said Mildred, as she read the letter once more. "That was a slip of the pen. It isn't 'just made': I made it a month ago. I think I will leave it now. The Murrays will be sure to believe that they have the first chance at it."

Mildred was young at the profession of letters!

When she put on her hat to go out and drop the valuable contribution into the letter-box at the corner, she was confident that in a day

or two she would receive an enthusiastic reply, accompanied with a cheque for about ten dollars and a request for as many more contributions as she was able to produce. Most probably, the editor would ask her to call and suggest articles that she would like to write. This was a splendid way to break the ice.

"I'm glad I thought of this," said Mildred, talking to herself. "I must write more verses. I must get a lot of things ready. I'll just bombard the magazines. I don't believe I'll have any trouble whatever in getting the Murrays to take my poems. Then, when I publish enough, they will bring them out in book-form. Hooray! Besides, I can elaborate several sketches that I have made for stories. Well, Mr. Bancroft, perhaps after all, you are a blessing in disguise! I can't go to such places as Blake's Pleasure Palace, if *that* is what newspaper work means. It was awfully funny, and I'm glad I saw it all; but I'll never go again to such a place, if I can help it."

And Mildred, with her sanguine temperament, laid her head upon her pillow in her little shabby room and quickly fell asleep, per-

fectly certain that the road of the immediate future would soon be blossoming with thornless roses.

Oh, Life! we abuse you sometimes; but how merciful you are to veil Youth's eyes with the golden dust of Hope!

For several weeks Mildred watched every mail for a reply. She became quite worn out with the strain of expecting the letter that was to bring the glad tidings of acceptance. It meant so much to her. It meant not merely the publication of one of her writings, but the opening of a door to Success.

The expected ten dollars had been appropriated (though not spent) for so many things that Mildred had a charge account against herself of seventy, or eighty, dollars!

At last, after she had waited two months, the envelope addressed in her own handwriting appeared one morning upon her plate at the breakfast table. Mildred saw it the moment she entered the room. She could hardly wait to open it. A more experienced *littérateur* would have noticed that it was suspiciously thick.

To the intense disappointment of Bernard Fogg and Miss Van Tassel, Mildred picked

up the envelope and retired to her own room to read it in private.

This is what she read:

OCTOBER 24, 1913.

Miss Mildred Ashton,

Lexington Avenue and Fortieth Street,
New York City.

DEAR MADAM: We cannot use translations. Moreover, there is no demand for Victor Hugo and authors of his type, entirely belonging to a past age. We are, therefore, returning the manuscript, which you were kind enough to submit to us.

With our grateful thanks for the opportunity of reading it, we are,

Yours very respectfully,

MURRAY, HODGE & COMPANY.

Dictated to

J. H. K.

"I'm glad I gave them so much pleasure," Mildred said. "If publishers feel like that, it's no use to rattle Victor Hugo's bones before their modern vision. So into the pigeon-hole *you* go! I'll have to try something else."

Mildred spent the whole day going through her papers. But the Crowfoot Crane episode and the letter from the Murrays gave her a new attitude towards the marketable possibil-

ity of her literary wares; and when she came to look over the half dozen or so stories and essays she had selected as eligible, she rejected them all.

It was Wednesday—the day that Mildred always paid Mrs. Carroll her twelve dollars. This week she could not meet her obligation. It was a horrible situation for Mildred. Nothing like it had ever happened to her. What should she do? Clearly she must explain matters to Mrs. Carroll and ask for an extension of time. The very idea was abhorrent. In the first place, Mildred shrank from asking such a favor from Mrs. Carroll; and in the second, she did not wish to expose her pecuniary condition. Mildred not only had a full share of individual pride; but the matter touched her family pride. It hurt her to admit to an outside person that things had got into such a tangle. In her youthful reasoning she felt that there was a disgrace in the collapse of an old family fortune: funds and homes always melted away through incompetence, or riotous living, and Mildred hated both. She was too young to realize that stern Fortune sometimes takes a hand in matters and wrests away her gifts from those who have

enjoyed them too long, quite independently of what they may do, or not do.

Cruel necessity now forced Mildred to rise to the occasion.

"What's the use of putting off the evil hour?" said Mildred, "I'll go and get it over. I'll not have this disagreeable Sword of Damocles hanging over my head. Yes; I'll go and get it over."

On her way down stairs in search of Mrs. Carroll, Mildred, concluding that she would make a clean breast of the whole matter, framed her story in the most concise words so that she could get the interview over quickly. She wanted no condolences. It is needless to say that Mrs. Carroll's surprise was great; but she was very sympathetic, and her Southern heart expanded to Mildred's trouble. She also appreciated her sensitiveness and her pride. The daughter of Thomas Pickens Fairfield, of Goose Creek, had seen *Tulip Hill* go under the hammer,—and she knew. Of course, she would extend the time of payment; and, moreover, indefinitely. Mrs. Carroll and Mildred Ashton were about on the same level with regard to business transactions.

"I do hope," she added, "Miss Ashton, that

you will be successful in your literary work. I always wanted to write, in fact, I am something of a scribbler myself. The Fairfields are all writers. I don't think it can be very hard, Miss Ashton," she continued, "to get started, because I had a friend, Lucy Wheeler—nobody ever thought *she* had any gift for writing—who got the first piece she ever wrote accepted by the *Saturday Evening Post*. Yes; she did; and they paid her two hundred dollars for it!"

Mildred's eyes opened wide. "What on earth was it?" she asked.

"Why, it was an interview with the Pope on the divorce question. Lucy was in Rome, and she had a special kind of introduction from Cardinal Gibbons (I believe Cardinal Gibbons is some kind of a relative of hers) and the Pope gave her an audience and she wrote it all up. You'll be sure to get on."

"Oh!" said Mildred to herself as she went back to her little room, "that's the way people talk about writing who haven't had any experience behind the scenes. It was the interview with the Pope that made the *Saturday Evening Post* take it and pay her a special price. Unfortunately, there is no St. Peter's

for me to go to. I wish I had some of Peter's Pence, though, just at this moment!"

Mildred paced up and down her small room like a tigress in a cage, without any apparent motive. She was busy thinking, however, and soon exclaimed aloud: "I know what I'll do. I'll write an article on Old New York! *That's* what I'll do; and I'll send it to Mr. Bancroft. I'll do it! I'm stuffed full of Miss Van Tassel's stories: I know all her grandmother's social triumphs in lower Fifth Avenue, Second Avenue, Hudson Square and Murray Hill; how she shopped in Pearl Street; and how she strolled in Battery Park. I'll go to the Library and get a lot of notes; I'll buy some tracing-paper and I'll trace some pictures out of old books; I'll hunt around in the old print-shops for pictures of old New York and celebrities of 1850; and I'll go to the Historical Society and look through the newspapers of the day. There you are! Then I'll write it all up, just as if I were really looking backward. Good idea! It will take me just a week to do it. I'll *do* it," and bang went her white hand on her little desk to emphasize her determination.

In the climax of Mildred's exhilaration, one

of her manuscripts, entitled *The Dream of the River*, caught her eye. "In the meantime," she said, "I believe I will send this along to the Penninck Company."

Mildred had made a good calculation: it took her just a week to gather the material and write her essay. She began by describing Jenny Lind's concert at Castle Garden; and how an epidemic of Jenny Lind fashions broke out—"Jenny Lind handkerchiefs," "Jenny Lind plaids" and even "Jenny Lind riding-hats." Then she gave a picture of the Broadway dandy in his fine patent leather boots, his large, striped trousers tightly fitting except around the boots, his gay, short waistcoat, his watch chain with its seal and bunch of "charms," his standing collar and broad, fancy tie, his sack coat with large sleeves and his frizzled hair and tall hat slightly tipped to one side. In contrast, she gave a detailed account of the "Bowery swell," who walked with a swagger and swing.

This was followed by descriptions of balls and other entertainments, which were managed by Brown, who was the fashionable caterer of the day, and sexton of Grace Church as well.

Next came pen-pictures of social celebrities and famous literary persons, such as Thackeray, William Cullen Bryant, Washington Irving, James K. Paulding, Rufus W. Griswold, Gulian C. Verplanck, Dr. John W. Francis, George P. Morris, Charles Fenno Hoffman, Fitz-Greene Halleck, Anna Cora Mowatt, Catherine M. Sedgwick, N. P. Willis and his sister, "Fanny Fern."

Then she closed with a reference to the last survivor of this literary set, Mrs. Vincenzo Botta, in whose drawing-room in West Thirty-seventh Street for nearly forty years every name celebrated in American literature and art had been announced and in which nearly every foreigner of distinction visiting New York had been entertained, not forgetting to describe the famous evening when Poe read *The Raven* for the first time in public to Miss Lynch's guests.

When this article was completed, Mildred decided not to send it to the *Argus*. "Mr. Bancroft will be sure to cut it down," she said, "and not use half the pictures, and he would only send me about eight, or ten, dollars for it. The next thing is what shall I do with it? The Murrays? No; no more Murrays just

at present. Oh, I know what I will do; I will send it to *Allman's Magazine*."

Mildred was learning!

She had travelled a long distance since the day she called on Crowfoot Crane! Yes; Mildred was learning!

Two weeks later, *The Dream of the River* came back from the Penninck Company with a printed slip reading: "Returned with thanks." The envelope with "Allman's Magazine" in the upper left hand corner which arrived on the same day, contained a cheque for one hundred dollars (for "text and pictures") and the hope that the writer would feel sufficiently encouraged to contribute one or two more papers. The editor also added "We like particularly your anecdotes of N. P. Willis, "Fanny Fern" and Thackeray. Can you not give us more of the same kind? We are bringing this out in an early number and should like another article to follow it."

"I call this good luck!" exclaimed Mildred. "I can go on indefinitely with this kind of thing. Life again looks easy!"

CHAPTER X

AN EVENING RECEPTION

“**I**SN’T that Mildred Ashton?” said Mrs. Jack Conway to her husband.

“Yes; I think it is,” he replied, “but I am not quite sure. I can’t see her face.”

“Neither can I,” said Mrs. Conway, “but I think it is. I wish she’d turn ’round.”

At that moment, the enthusiastic, though gentle, clapping of the gloved hands of several hundred guests diverted the attention of Mr. and Mrs. Conway to the arrival of Signor Marconi, whose slight figure, in evening dress of a decidedly Italian cut, was now walking down the passage-way through the chairs to the raised platform from which he, as guest of honor, was going to deliver an informal address on wireless telegraphy to a most distinguished gathering.

For more than a quarter of a century, Mrs. Henry’s receptions had held a unique place among New York’s social entertainments.

There were several reasons for this. It is hard to say which was the chief one.

Perhaps the first reason was that Mrs. Henry herself was possessed of unusual personality, culture and charm; perhaps, the second one was that, as the widow of a distinguished astronomer, she attracted to her Madison Avenue home scientists, men of letters, and artists, who delighted in her own responsive intellect. Nor were they averse to enjoying her graceful, charming hospitality, her delightful dinners and her notable receptions. Another reason was that, coming from an old Knickerbocker family possessed of wealth and social position for many generations, Mrs. Henry naturally continued her family traditions.

Moreover, Mrs. Henry had made a gift to science herself. She had equipped two observatories—one in North America and one in South America—which she now maintained—to continue her husband's work of photographing the heavens. Through this highly intelligent disposition of a great part of her fortune, the pursuit and development of one branch of Science had been made possible. Therefore, though most unostentatious in this

matter—which had been the chief occupation of her thought for years—Mrs. Henry had won the admiration and great respect of the scientific world in both continents. Her name was known throughout the world.

Those who did not appreciate the value of this gift and who could not understand its full significance, were, at least, able to see in it a touching and exquisite memorial from a devoted wife to a devoted husband, who happened to be a pioneer in a certain branch of astronomical work.

It was natural, therefore, that Mrs. Henry should attract all that was best and brightest in America.

Mildred had known Mrs. Henry through Mrs. Steele and had accompanied Mrs. Steele to several of Mrs. Henry's entertainments. Mildred was particularly attracted to Mrs. Henry; and she admired her greatly. Consequently, Mrs. Henry's was one of the few houses at which Mildred called on her return to New York under such altered conditions.

She told Mrs. Henry about *Wild Acres* and found her most sympathetic. Her altered conditions and boarding-house address made no difference in Mrs. Henry's attitude to-

wards Mildred. In a week after Mildred's first call, she received an invitation to a dinner-party in the famous home.

So, of course, it was Mildred Ashton that Mrs. Conway's quick eye had caught through a vista of white and pink necks and shoulders and backs of neatly barbered heads of gray, black, brown, light, much, little and no hair, rising out of tall and stiffly starched collars with white ties.

Signor Marconi now took his stand on the platform and Mrs. Henry, after receiving the last late arrival, slipped into her seat at the end of the last row of chairs in the ball-room, a distinguished figure in her low-necked white silk dress trimmed with point lace and wearing her famous pearls.

Those guests who had noticed on the way up the wide stairway leading to the library, where Mrs. Henry received them before they passed quickly into the ball-room, J. W. Alexander's portrait of Mrs. Henry in a dark green velvet dress with her two Italian greyhounds by her side, marked that Mr. Alexander had not exaggerated the rich red of her abundant hair, which she wore in a simple knot, nor the steady gaze of her gray eyes.

Guests who knew her well noticed a little brighter gleam in those eyes for them than for her more formal acquaintances beneath the well-bred manner that gave the same gracious greeting to all and each.

Marconi finished his delightful talk. The audience rose. Some of the guests went forward to speak to him; others sought their friends; while others remained where they were to greet friends who were making their difficult way to them through the chairs and through other animated groups. The buzz of voices arose from the room like a mumurous hum of bees.

Almost immediately there was a general movement towards and down the wide stairway. Down they passed—men whose names were as well known in foreign countries as in their own country and who wore their well-earned decorations and orders; men, whose tiny colored buttons in the lapels of their coats proclaimed a right to especial attentions; men, whose faces had become familiar by means of the illustrated magazines and papers; men conspicuous in science, letters, law, politics, medicine and art; retired army and navy officers; and noted foreigners visiting New York.

In addition to these, there were many social celebrities, young and old. These notable personages were escorting ladies, of all ages, attired in silks, satins and velvets of every hue and many styles; but, perhaps, owing to the great number of middle-aged guests, black velvet and point lace was the most universal costume. Rich laces and splendid family jewels were worn on this occasion; for many of the guests were descendants of New York's most aristocratic families, both Dutch and English. Here and there in the rustling stream of silks one might note a famous woman who had attained distinction in science, literature, or art.

Down they all came into the drawing-room, where the four superb Gobelin tapestries, filling the entire walls, showed to particular advantage in the light of the immense gilt *torchères* that stood in each corner, each candelabra bearing aloft a pyramid of lighted candles. Some of the guests seated themselves upon the handsome Empire chairs and sofas; others paused before the cabinets and *vitrines* to examine the rare collection of Cypriote glass and choice miniatures; while others walked directly into the dining-room.

Here the light from large silver lamps, softened by shades of pale rose-colored silk fell only upon the table, so tastefully decorated with flowers and confections of various kinds and massive bowls of silver containing salads and punch. The rest of the room was in shadow and formed a fine contrast to the brilliant drawing-room.

Mildred was listening enthralled, to an elderly gentleman with smooth-shaven face and of quiet and unassuming manners. She could hardly believe that she stood face to face with the "Wizard of America," Mr. Edison, who, perhaps, of all the many distinguished persons present, appealed most to her imagination.

A distinguished surgeon of New York, noted for his discoveries in the use of radium, now came up to speak to Mildred and Mr. Edison.

While they were talking Mildred took a plate of chicken salad and creamed oysters from the hands of one waiter and a glass of champagne from another. As she was trying to balance the glass on her plate and bow meanwhile to an acquaintance across the dining-room, she heard a voice behind her, saying "How do you do, Mildred?"

"Why, Louise," Mildred replied, turning

around, "how glad I am to see you!" Then, "How do you do, Jack?" as the latter held out his hand.

A lion-hunter, having been watching for an opportunity to pounce upon Mr. Edison, seized this moment to engage the latter's attention; and another watchful observer carried off the distinguished surgeon. Mildred was, therefore, left free to explain to the Conways what she was doing in New York and to make her polite excuses for having neglected them.

Mrs. Conway had changed very little since Mildred first met her six years ago as Louise Steele at the house of Mrs. Steele, her aunt by marriage. Louise was then, according to Mildred's opinion, a veteran of twenty-five, who had seen seven—actually *seven*—seasons. Mildred, who had not then "come out," looked upon Louise with awe and respect. This opinion, however, wore away soon after Mildred made her bow to society at a *débutante* tea given for her by Mrs. Steele.

Louise had married soon after this event. Mildred had been one of the bridesmaids; but, not being particularly sympathetic with Louise, they had drifted apart.

Louise had always impressed Mildred as cold and selfish; and as she now looked upon her well-chiselled features, her fine profile artfully accented by the hair-dresser's arrangement of her black hair, her conventional smile, showing her small and very even teeth, and her black eyes untouched by emotion of any kind, Mildred did not alter her opinion. She thought her, however, exceedingly handsome but exceedingly unsympathetic.

Louise was very cordial—she seldom allowed herself to be as cordial to any one—and Mildred was responsive. Moreover, Louise's presence brought back happy memories of Mrs. Steele. Mildred's sincere smile of pleased recognition, therefore, warmed Louise's cold nature so much that she immediately began to entertain as deep a friendship for Mildred as it was possible for a temperament like hers to cherish.

Mildred noticed that her dress was of white satin, that its cut was extremely stylish, that it fit her like the proverbial glove, and that no matter which way she turned her silhouette was correct. "Yes," Mildred thought, "Louise is correct in every detail—from her *coiffure* to her slippers. She is wearing just

the right jewels, she has just the right dash of the right perfume, she carries the right fan, she gives you the latest bow, she holds her beautiful figure in the latest pose. Yes, Louise is a very handsome woman and a very stylish one; but Jack has grown ten years older! His moustache is really quite gray, and so is his hair, particularly above the ears. I wonder if the Conways are happy!"

All this Mildred gradually noted while the three were engaged in the difficult matter of eating from plates that were occasionally jostled by the crush of people moving towards the table, and by waiters who were coming from the table with delicacies of all kinds.

"Let us go over there," said Jack Conway, "we are standing in the very worst place, just here between the doors. Let's make for that corner! There are two chairs over there; and you can both be seated. Do let me get you something more, Mildred. Will you have an ice, or a *biscuit tortoni*? Which will you have, Louise? Oh, here's Greene! Hello, Gilbert!"

"How are you, Jack? Good evening, Mrs. Conway. Delighted to see you!"

"Miss Ashton," said Jack, "let me present Mr. Greene."

"Oh, I know Mr. Greene," said Mildred cordially, extending her hand in greeting.

"Who could forget Miss Ashton? 'Lives there on earth a soul so dead?' " replied Mr. Greene, thinking meanwhile that she had one of the most radiant and captivating smiles he had ever beheld. Mildred had developed a great deal since Greene had seen her at the Conways' wedding four years ago. She had gained in poise. He now admired her manner. His artistic eye immediately scrutinized the rare jeweled ornament with which Mildred had clasped the front of her low-necked dress. This jewel, or cluster of jewels, consisted of twenty-five large topazes, each one set in a mass of delicate golden filagree work. It was fashioned something after the form of a cross, with pendants, each pendant consisting of a group of three gems and each gem imbedded by a golden cobweb. Each group of gems was set in a larger golden cobweb. Moreover, each group was flexible enough to sway with the slightest motion of the wearer. At the top was a particularly large and brilliant topaz. The jewels

were perfectly matched in color and gleamed like big drops of frozen sherry and with a liquid light. The beautiful ornament, being six inches long, reached to Mildred's waist. It was an heirloom in the Ashton family and Mildred only wore it on special occasions.

Gilbert Greene also admired Mildred's taste in dress. She was wearing this evening a canary-colored corded silk. It was perfectly plain, without the slightest trimming, not even the addition of a little lace. Her one ornament was the splendid jewel that held her low-necked bodice in place.

This little group of four remained together during the rest of the evening. Mildred liked Gilbert Greene very much. In the course of conversation she learned that he was an architect and that he had spent a great part of his life in Paris, where his father had been consul.

After graduation at Yale, he had returned to Paris to study at the *École des Beaux-Arts*. He had been in New York for about two years and was rapidly attaining eminence in his profession. He had built several charming villas in Newport, Southampton and Lenox, and his taste was such that already people were be-

ginning to talk about him and to tell each other that "Mr. Greene never makes a mistake." Through his old college friend, Jack Conway, a Wall Street broker, Gilbert Greene had been quite fortunate in the investment of a little money that he had inherited from his father.

Artistic, speaking French like a Parisian, and gifted with a charm of manner, Gilbert Greene had "arrived" at the early age of thirty. Although he spent much of his time at the Century Club and the Player's, he was a frequent guest at the Conways. When the friends parted that evening and Mildred, having declined Jack Conway's invitation to let them drop her at her residence, was about to enter her taxi-cab, Gilbert Greene, who *happened* to come down the carpeted steps underneath the awning at the same time, put her into the cab, adding, as he lifted his top hat, "I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you soon at the Conways, Miss Ashton. I go there very often. Good-night!"

CHAPTER XI

THE RIFT WITHIN THE LUTE

MOST of his friends envied Jack Conway. He had always known money and a charming home. Fortune had smiled upon him in every way. After graduation at Yale, where he had met and formed a friendship with Gilbert Greene, he slipped into his father's business in Wall Street. He soon gave evidence of a real gift for financial operations. Jack Conway had shown no particular talent at college, where he had proved himself a good all round average student and acquired a fair reputation in athletics. It was not until he became a Wall Street broker that he exhibited any marked ability.

Mr. John Conway, senior, delighted with his son's rapid success, was, in a few years, able to realize the dream of his life and retire with his wife and unmarried daughter to his country home at Ardsley-on-the-Hudson, leaving Jack in command of the business.

Jack Conway was lucky in his marriage, so his friends said four years ago, when Miss Louise Steele, a noted heiress, became his bride at St. Thomas's. The wedding was fine and very fashionable—Louise always managed things well—and everybody was there.

Everybody was satisfied that the two were wonderfully well-suited and everybody predicted the most alarming happiness.

Was it only four years ago? It seemed an age to Jack. Moreover, the memory of that eventful day never came back to him wreathed with happy thoughts. He knew it now: he had drifted into this marriage with Louise. They had been out together much; they had dined together; they had danced together; they had been to theatre parties and to supper parties together; and then, all of a sudden, they became the chief figures in a much-talked of wedding!

Jack could not have described in detail how it had all come about, if anyone had asked him. He remembered, however, very distinctly that only a week later he had realized that he had made a mistake. He then, and very suddenly, found out that he was in for that most horrible of all things—a loveless

marriage. Yes; he told himself he had married Louise because she was handsome and stylish and because he would be proud to have her preside over his establishment. In other words, he had married her for ambitious reasons; and now he was discovering that marriage must mean something more than that. But in justice to Jack Conway, it ought to be said that he had not as yet the slightest idea of the emotion of love. He had passed on from one thing to another in a life of ease and pleasure and no woman had ever raised the slightest ripple upon his very quiet pool of a heart. The old proverb "Still waters run deep" sometimes occurred to Gilbert Greene, when he looked at Jack in wonderment, adding to himself: "If love ever does strike poor old Jack, it will go pretty hard with him."

So Jack, who had rather expected Louise to set the pace for the love-making, soon discovered that his presence bored, rather than delighted, her; and he settled down to make the best of it. Fortunately, his emotional nature was not disturbed; but he was conscious that he had missed something. For instance, he had vaguely expected when he returned home after a long day in Wall Street to be

greeted, certainly, with a welcoming smile and, perhaps, outstretched arms. He found neither. 'At that hour Louise was usually calling, except on Fridays, when she, herself, received.

Louise, on the other hand, was not in the least disappointed. This marriage was just what she had intended it to be. Louise had been out seven seasons and did not care to face another onslaught of *débutantes*. It was about time she married. She had refused several brilliant offers in her first two seasons, and she felt that each year made her less desirable. Looking over the list of butterflies, who were basking in the sunlight of her charms, she dismissed the fortune-hunters and felt that Jack Conway was the best one to select. He had a handsome income of his own and was a good-looking fellow besides, being tall and light and forming a good contrast to her own brunette type,—all these were advantages that Louise balanced up carefully. Yes; Jack Conway could have her hand. She was too wise to give any one her fortune. This was secure. It had been well tied up by a very worldly and calculating mother, who had outlived an exceedingly unhappy hus-

band. This mother had trained her daughter to think of no one but herself. Therefore, Louise's marriage was a piece of perfectly cold calculation. She made up her mind one evening after a dance at Sherry's that Jack should marry her; and Jack did.

Louise gave a great deal of thought to the wedding—a great deal more than she bestowed upon Jack before, or after—and the wedding went off beautifully. People still talked of it! Gilbert Greene, Jack's best man, looked at the cold, impassive face of the bride and trembled for his friend. "This is not self-control," he said to himself, "this is indifference. Such indifference would kill *me*! I'm glad I am not the one to place the ring I have in my pocket on her finger."

On their return to New York after the wedding-trip Louise entered her new Madison Avenue home as if she had lived there always. She put romance into nothing. She had no sense of romance: she was incapable of it. Immediately she organized her household and by the end of the first week, everything was running perfectly.

Jack Conway had certainly gratified his ambitions. Louise was a perfect figure head

and a perfect fashion-plate. Her costumes were striking; her dinners delightful; her service perfect. What more could he wish?

Louise had all she wanted out of life. Jack did not; and the first one to observe this was Gilbert Greene, who spent much of his leisure at the Conways'.

The Conways were the envy of many people. They seemed to have everything the world could give. The world did not notice that they were on formal terms, though pleasant ones; for they appeared much in society, gave charming dinners, and had their pew at St. Thomas's and their box at the opera.

Jack swirled down town every morning in his limousine and Louise went shopping in hers, with Pompon, her little Pekinese, after her late breakfast in bed and long *Séances* with her hair-dresser, manicure and French maid, Annette. Shopping, tailors and milliners occupied what was left of the morning, and luncheons, card-parties and calls used up the afternoons. There was a short interval spent with Annette in dressing for dinner. There were usually guests to dinner, unless Louise and Jack were dining out,—so how could she

see anything of Jack? Now how could she? Perfectly impossible!

Jack soon learned not to care. His breakfast was ceremoniously served every morning at half-past eight. Afterwards, he stepped into his limousine and reached his office about ten o'clock. He lunched down town, and frequently ordered his car to stop on the way up town at one of his clubs and dashed home just in time to slip into his dress suit for dinner. He then fell into any engagements that Louise had made for the evening, unless he had made some engagement for himself, which happened rarely.

Such had life been for four years until Mildred Ashton passed into the orbit of the Conways.

On the whole, the Conway house was a pleasant one to visit. Life was well-ordered and made comfortable for everyone; and, as Jack and Louise were both adepts in the difficult art of entertaining, delightful guests were attracted to their home.

Mildred soon became a frequent visitor. It was a great relief to her to escape from the dullness of Mrs. Carroll's and to be in an

atmosphere of a well-appointed home once more.

Besides being fond of Mildred, Louise found her useful. She was always willing to accompany her when Louise desired a companion. Mildred was always sweet and sunny, and she often filled in a dinner very conveniently. She played cards well, and that suited Louise, who was devoted to auction-bridge. Moreover, Mildred was unusually obliging about her music. She not only could play beautifully, but she was willing to play for people as long as they cared to listen; and, still more wonderful to relate, she was willing to play dance music. As she loved to dance herself, she did this well.

Louise was very fond of Mildred's playing; and soon after she met her at Mrs. Henry's, it was arranged that Mildred should come and practice whenever she pleased. It also soon became expected that Mildred would dine on opera nights; and she had her regular seat in the Conway box.

Louise and Mildred presented a wonderful contrast: the one so artificial and cold; the other, so natural, spontaneous and warm-hearted.

Jack Conway began to appreciate this very early.

Nothing gave him so much pleasure as to hear Mildred play. Suddenly Jack Conway opened another facet of his mind (as he had done in business) and awoke to the pleasure of art. Jack had never cared for music; and he had always abominated the piano. Mildred's touch changed his attitude towards it. She brought to it something so bright, so soothing, so beautiful, so glowing and so delicate that it seemed to Jack as if the instrument were a medium for the expression of the poetry within her. To say that Mildred played the piano would be altogether misleading. To say the piano enabled Mildred to play *herself*, would be more like it. She had a marvellous natural touch and much technique. She played in the modern Polish school and the notes seemed to drip from her slender fingers like showers of opalescent pearls. Jack soon learned to love her Chopin and Debussy and the way she played some of the songs of Schubert, Schumann and Robert Franz, which she had transcribed herself; but, most of all, he loved to hear her take a Wagner score and play long excerpts from the

Meistersinger, Tristan, Parsifal, or the *Ring*. She often gave the hearer a suggestion of the instrumentation.

Jack Conway soon found that by familiarity with these works his enjoyment of the great music-dramas was greatly increased; and he seriously asked Mildred if she wouldn't consider him as a pupil—just to play to him and analyze the scores. Louise thought it a splendid idea. The fact was Louise languidly admitted to herself that Jack bored her and it was a convenient way to get rid of Jack for an hour or two. Moreover, this arrangement left her free to entertain guests and revel in their flatteries, which meant so much to her.

CHAPTER XII

A LITTLE DINNER PARTY.

FRANÇOIS, the Conways' butler, hated Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. These three "opera nights" usually spoiled dinner. There was apt to be more or less of a rush; and the result was that some of the choice dishes were carried away unappreciated. Sometimes, indeed, whole courses were omitted.

As he handed a beautifully decorated fruit-salad to Mr. De Witt, who was seated at Mrs. Conway's right, François, chancing to glance across the round table, read with alarm the dawning symptoms of restlessness in the host's face.

François had a rose-colored dinner this evening. The large, low silver basket in the centre of the table was filled with pink roses, loosely arranged; the shades on the two candelabra, on either side of the basket, falling in cascades of crystal girandoles, were pink;

and the bon-bons in the four little silver baskets, symmetrically arranged around the three larger pieces, were also pink. The ices were to be pink roses; the *petits fours* were ornamented with pink icing; and François had selected the pink Limoges china decorated with pink and purple orchids for the lighter courses.

Mrs. Conway, accommodating herself to the scheme of color, appeared in her rose-colored satin, very becoming to her dark eyes and black hair, dressed, as usual, in the latest style.

Mildred Ashton, the one other woman at the table, had brought her white lace dress into harmony with the decorations by pinning on her left shoulder a large and perfect pink rose that she had taken from a vase in the drawing-room while waiting for the arrival of the other guests, responding to her hostess's "You haven't got it in the right place," by "I don't care. I don't intend to spoil the rose. It won't get crushed where it is." The grateful rose soon fell into a most graceful position and accented the whiteness of Mildred's neck. It attracted the attention of both Mr. Philip De Witt and Mr. Gilbert Greene, who

arrived simultaneously. François approved of these guests. He had never known them to be late.

After bowing formally to the tall, slim and dark man with a Van Dyke beard, who was introduced to her, Mildred turned to greet more cordially Mr. Gilbert Greene, whom she had seen so often at the Conways since their meeting at Mrs. Henry's, two months ago.

Dinner, ordered earlier than usual on account of the opera, had been in progress some time when Gilbert Greene asked suddenly: "By the way, what's the opera to-night?"

"*Tristan*," answered Jack, quickly, "wonderful *Tristan*!"

"Yes," exclaimed Louise, "*Tristan*, that long-winded *Tristan*. I am only going because it is Selma's *première* and because it's a gala night."

"I'll take you anywhere you please, Mrs. Conway," broke in Philip De Witt, "if you don't want to go to the opera."

"I *do* want to go to the opera, but I don't want to go to *Tristan*, Mr. De Witt," Louise replied.

"I don't see how you can get one without

the other to-night, Mrs. Conway," said Gilbert Greene. "But I tell you what we'll do. We'll all go, to-morrow, to the liveliest show we can find, to offset it, if you like—my entertainment. You're all invited!"

"I'll head the list," said Mildred.

"What sticks me," Greene went on, "is the German *prima-donna*. I confess my illusions are all gone when a perfect mountain of woman, all draped in white, and wearing shiny metal armor, hand cuffs and a helmet—for all the world like a brand new parlor stove—stands up in a scene to inspire love and romance! Those stiff artificial attitudes! It is all so mechanical, so uninspired! Every thing measured off. A certain musical phrase gets her on the other side of the stage, to sit on a rock, to stand under a tree, to pick up her shield, or to clutch a horse's mane, or tail. Then, when the stage is thick with *ishes* and *hochs* and *eins* and *deins* and *meins* and *seins*—"

"And whines?" suggested Mildred.

"Yes; and whines, she violently grabs her draperies and holds them out in such a way that the wind will catch them and then she *strides* across the stage, or *races* up a rock,

with an air-filled mantle. No; I cannot stand the German *prima-donna*. I suppose you think that is rank heresy, Miss Ashton, and that I am a musical pariah."

"Not at all," replied Mildred, sipping her sauterne, "I agree with you. There are some things that are a little too Teu—"

"Go on," interrupted Greene, laughing, "too, too, too, too—"

"Teutonic," said Mildred, in a reproachful tone, "for my taste. You have to shut your eyes sometimes and just listen to the music."

"Fancy that! Oh, what an argument!" laughed Greene, pleasantly. "Oh, Miss Ashton, can't you do better than that?"

"Yes; I will make a great concession."

"Thank you! What is it?"

"I consider *Don Giovanni* the most wonderful of all operas. Old von Bülow said it was the opera of the future. I agree with him. *There*, will that satisfy you?"

"Partly. There's hope for you. I am beginning to feel encouraged with regard to your musical future. Now, if you will only say that you like *Aïda*—"

"I *adore* *Aïda*," broke in Mildred, quickly and emphatically.

"Hooray!" cried Greene. "You are not half as bad as I thought you were!"

"I suppose you will offer me your hand in marriage, Mr. Greene, if I tell you that I had one of the most delightful of my many operatic experiences last week at *Manon*."

"Massenet's, or Puccini's?"

"Oh, Massenet's, of course."

"You shall have both my hands, Miss Ashton, and everything they can grab for you in the round world. Go on."

"Well," continued Mildred, "I think *Manon* is a gem. The score is ideal: so full of lovely melodies, deliciously harmonized; melodies that seem to sing out spontaneously from 'cello and violin; melodies that do not puzzle the brain, but tempt the senses to delightful dreams."

"Hear that from a 'Perfect Wagnerite'!" exclaimed Greene. "Didn't you like the scenes?"

"*Rather!*" replied Mildred. "They reminded me of fan-mounts by Watteau, Leloir, Pater and Boucher. Weren't they lovely? That of the inn, for example, surrounded by bright hollyhocks, with glimpses of a pretty

landscape in the distance, dotted with figures, and the merry party seen dining at the window."

"Yes," replied Greene, "and that old stage-coach dashing up to the inn, laden with luggage and boxes; Manon jumping out; and the old coach dashing off again. *Awfully* good picture!"

"Yes," continued Mildred, "and the village-green with its holiday-makers in the third act, with the rustic clowns; the vendors under the trees; the large-hatted and garlanded youths and maidens dancing gavottes and minuets; Manon, all patched and powdered, arriving in a sedan chair—"

"Lovely French pictures," cried Greene, "*Salut à la France! Oh, France comme je t'adore!*"

"And didn't Alouetta sing that gavotte beautifully?" Jack observed.

"Beeyoutifully!" Greene sung out.

"Oh, I loved that, too," cried Louise, "I always love Alouetta. I agree with you, Mr. Greene. I *hate* those fat German fraus. Mildred said something good the other day—"

"Thank you!" Mildred interrupted quickly.

"She said," continued Louise, "that Madame Pumpnickel-Holstein, the new Brünnhilde you know, has an organ and she pulls out all the stops at once."

"How beautifully Serinsky sang '*En fermant les yeux je vois là-bas!*'" Greene went on. "It was just luscious! Heavenly!"

"And don't forget Moreau," pleaded Mildred, "the dashing soldier. Didn't he show how great a small part may become in the hands of a rare artist?"

"I am always dead stuck on Moreau's costumes," said Greene. "I wish to heaven he'd dress me! I'm going to get a suit like his last one in *Manon*. Do you remember it? White cloth with orange velvet collar and cuffs. Stunning!"

"Where are you going to wear it?" asked Mildred. "At the Century Club?"

At this moment Jack drew his fob from his pocket and looked at his watch.

"*There!*" said Louise. "Jack's restless, and there are several courses to come. Don't let him spoil your dinner, Mr. Greene. Mr. De Witt is charmingly unconcerned."

Mr. De Witt smiled appreciatively.

"Yes," said Jack, "I *am* getting restless. It

is half-past seven and *Tristan* begins promptly at eight, *promptly*. It's a long opera. I wouldn't miss the Prelude for anything." Then, turning to Mildred, "Mildred, let us excuse ourselves and go. The limousine can come back for these *gourmets*. They don't care what they miss, or what they see. All they want is a knife, a fork and a wine-glass."

"And a plate, please," added Greene.

"Yes, I'll be delighted to go," Mildred responded. "I have been worrying about missing that Prelude for the last ten minutes. Excuse me, Louise, will you?"

Jack rose. "Greene, will you join us? I see that De Witt is a fixture."

"No, thank you," said Greene. "Go and enjoy yourselves."

Broadway, bright as day, was so congested with people and carriages that when the Conway limousine came within sight of the Opera House the *chauffeur* was compelled to fall into line two blocks above the entrance. The street was a surging sea of people that blocked the automobiles and cars.

"I'm glad we came away; we haven't any time to spare," said Jack. "I hope we sha'n't

have to stay here much longer. *There!* we move at last!"

Passing into the Opera House, they found the *foyer* packed. It was difficult to get through the gate.

"I am always thrilled when I come into this house," said Mildred, as they walked up the red velvet stairway. "Just listen to *that*," she added, as a boy went by with an armful of *libretti*, calling "Ahpra Book, Ahpra Book, Ahpra Book! Book for the Ahpra! Ahpra Book!"

"Don't you love that?" she asked. "He seems to promise such delight."

"I do," replied Jack.

"Don't you love our dear, old New York, anyway? Don't you love all this?" and Mildred laid her hand on his arm in her enthusiasm, as she seemed to take the whole scene into her all embracing glance.

"Yes; especially that gentleman over there."

"Don't be silly," said Mildred, as she followed Jack's glance, which directed hers to a short, stout, hook-nosed man with a fat paunch and a huge diamond blazing in the centre of his expansive shirt front, evidently a theatrical manager, who was standing at the top of

the stairway, to stare at the women ascending in their handsome opera cloaks.

On entering the Conway box Jack lifted Mildred's cloak from her shoulders and hung it up, hung up his own fur-lined overcoat, took a quick glance in the small mirror to see if his hair and tie were all right and then drew the red curtains for Mildred to pass through. "Let us leave the front seats for the others," she said, seating herself in one of the chairs at the back, "we want to follow the score."

Jack took the chair next to hers and placed the piano score on her lap.

"Now we are comfortably settled," he said, "and ready for the fray. Look! the boxes are nearly all filled!"

CHAPTER XIII

AT THE OPERA

THOSE who say that New Yorkers are not cultivated in music should see the Metropolitan Opera House on a Wagner night. For most other operas the occupants of the boxes and the parquet straggle in as they please; but a Wagner night creates an amazing unanimity of promptness. The seats are nearly all filled before the conductor makes his appearance; and the unfortunate late comers, who enter after the house is darkened and who push past those who are already seated and lost in the performance, are not welcomed with the kindest of glances, nor the sweetest of feelings. Silence is enforced; and any one who speaks above a whisper, or who whispers frequently, is in danger of sharp rebuke.

The boxes were filling rapidly. Faces familiar for years behind the large, red velvet horseshoe were already to be seen; beautiful costumes were grouping themselves here and

there, forming charming studies in color; jewels were sparkling; fans were waving; perfumes filled the tropical air; black-coated butterflies flitted about; ushers conducted people to their seats in the parquet, dress-circle and balcony; in the upper galleries women and girls took off their hats and coats, revealing brighter hues than they exhibited on their arrival; and, all the while, the liveried boys moved about the aisles and corridors calling "Ahpra Book! Book for the Ahpra! Ahpra Book! Ahpra Book! Ahpra Book! Ahpra Book!"

Then the glimmering lights beneath the green shades of the orchestra glow brighter and the musicians begin to enter, one by one, up through the little steps below the centre of the stage. They take their places.

Now appears a striking figure: quiet, dignified, impressive, as if he were going to conduct a church service rather than an orchestra. It is the magnetic Tosky! He is greeted with a tornado of applause.

"I never see Tosky come in without experiencing a sort of thrill," said Mildred. "He enters with such a quiet solemnity and brings with him a curious quality of enchant-

ment that seems to envelop the entire orchestra. He makes it, indeed, a 'mystic abyss' of tone."

"Yes, he has a wonderful personality," Jack acquiesced. "I hear that they don't have many rehearsals. All he has to do is to wave that wand of his and the men play as if they were on fire."

"See how calm he looks," said Mildred. "Notwithstanding his unconventional hair, I think he is exceptionally handsome."

"Women seem to think so," said Jack, "but then they always go into raptures over musicians."

"Men admire Tosky, too," Mildred replied. "I know lots of men—"

"Tosky won't begin," Jack interrupted, "until there is absolute silence throughout the house, from that sea of people in the top gallery to the people in the front rows just behind him. Look at him now!"

Tosky, standing like a statue on his raised platform, was looking up and down and round and round. Gradually the hum of voices ceased: the attention of the multitude had become magnetized by the little black figure at the conductor's desk. Once again he

looked up and down and round and round; for Tosky approached a Wagnerian performance in something like a religious mood. Silence must be absolute.

Jack turned the leaf of the score. It crackled. Tosky looked up: his quick ear had instantly located the sound in the Conway box.

Now the silence was absolute. You could have heard a feather drop. The house was not only still, but reverent.

Now then: "tap, tap, tap," goes Tosky's *bâton* on the desk. The lights are turned very low; the house becomes mysterious in the darkness and quietness; and an electric current seems to run through the entire orchestra. Each man is held as if by magic under the spell of Tosky's long, white stick.

He looks at the violoncellos. Deep, deep, deep they begin the sad wail of the *Confession of Love*, very softly, then increasing in tone and as if the phrase were being dug out of a bottomless pit. It is followed by the melancholy *Desire*, sung by the oboes, clarinets, *cor anglais* and bassoons, with an affecting accent and completing the harmonic idea of the *Confession of Love*. This musical phrase dies away in a painful longing that seems to

be also interrogating fate. Then comes an impressive rest. These phrases are repeated; and Tosky emphasizes them more each time. He seems to dig deeper and deeper into the orchestral abyss and requires accents that are still more poignant. Again the impressive pause. Twice more—four times in all—the *Confession of Love* and *Desire* are repeated, with the long, solemn pauses between, each time deeper, more passionate and more sorrowful,—climax upon climax!

Then the 'cello announces *The Glance*. This is followed by the *Love Philtre* and the *Death Potion*; the violas and oboes tell of the *Magic Casket*; and then, following a superb, sweeping crescendo, the violins announce the *Deliverance by Death*.

Tosky's magic *bâton* seems to elucidate all the woven web of music for the listener; to unravel its tangled mystery; and to lift motive after motive into prominence. The poignant accents of love and longing and the dark notes of death and fate cross one another like the light and shadow of a summer's day. At last the *Confession of Love* becomes especially prominent, only to die away distressfully upon the woodwind.

As the curtain opens upon the scene of the deck of the ship that is bearing Isolde to Cornwall to be the unwilling bride of King Mark, Mildred takes a quick look at the reclining and unhappy Isolde who hears the song of the sailor on the mast. Then she glues her eyes to the score for a time. She looks up again at Isolde in her magnificent outburst of anger, calling for storms to rise from the calm sea to engulf the ship; she looks up again when Isolde bids Brangäne bring the *Magic Casket* and selects a *Death Potion*, which she intends to make Tristan drink with her; and she looks up again when the woodwind and strings announce *Tristan the Hero*. Now she ignores the score for a while, watching with interest the great scene of the drinking of the *Love Potion*, which Brangäne has substituted for the poison. Then she looks at the pages again, noting how beautifully the *Confession of Love* and *Desire* are scored for the violoncellos and woodwind and how *The Glance*, on viola and 'cello, grows more and more expressive and intense as the eyes of the lovers meet and tell one another their mutual fascination.

Jack Conway has not yet arrived at such

experienced and systematic division of interest between the stage and the score. He looks now at the stage, now at the score and more than either at Mildred's bright eyes that are absorbing the stage pictures, or at her heavy lids that veil these eyes when intent upon the pages.

Long as this act is, it seems short to these enthusiastic amateurs. It is drawing to a close. The ship has arrived at Cornwall; the sailors are busy with the ropes; King Mark comes on board to welcome his bride; and Isolde, dazed with rapture, faints in Tristan's arms. The curtain closes to a last sad wail of *Desire* from the orchestra.

"Tosky doesn't play notes," Mildred observed. "He plays *streams* of melody. The notes simply melt into one another."

The gigantic audience—equal to the entire population of a small town—which has overflowed into the aisles and corridors and which has been silent and motionless throughout the entire act, burst into wild applause. The house rang with cries of "Bravo!" and "Brava!" and Selma and Serinsky were recalled and recalled.

As the lights came up Mildred sighed heav-

ily and Jack looked into her face with a long steady gaze. Then suddenly Mildred started, realizing for the first time that they were alone.

"I wonder why the others haven't come?" she exclaimed.

"Shall I telephone to the house and see what is the matter?"

"Suppose you do."

"All right! I'll be back in a few minutes."

As Jack was stepping out of the box, a man unknown to him, said: "May I call on Miss Ashton?"

"Certainly," Jack responded, holding the door open while the stranger passed through.

Mildred, hearing a step, turned her head.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Clapp."

"How do you do, Miss Ashton," said Clapp, taking the hand she so cordially offered. "How are you enjoying the opera?"

"Immensely," replied Mildred.

"I saw you when you first came in," said Clapp. "I am sitting in the parquet, six rows from the front, over there on the other side of the house. I came with Mr. Hunecker. He is a crank over this opera. He says Selma is the best Isolde since Lilli Lehmann."

"What does Mr. Huneker think of Serinsky?" Mildred asked, eagerly.

"He likes him very much. He has been comparing him with Niemann and Alvary; but what he says is beyond me. I never saw *Tristan and Isolde* before. Did you?"

"Oh, many, many times," answered Mildred. "I couldn't count the times. And each time it strikes me as more wonderful and more beautiful than the last."

"It's altogether beyond me, Miss Ashton," replied Clapp. "I'm not a musical sharp like Huneker and you, you know. I hope you haven't forgotten that you promised to go to the theatre one night with me."

At this moment, Jack entered.

"Mr. Conway," said Mildred, "let me introduce Mr. Clapp."

Clapp bowed. "I must be off," he said, noting the general movement of the men all over the house to return to their seats.

"Won't you stay with us?" said Jack, devoutly hoping that he wouldn't.

"No, thank you," said Clapp. "I'm with a friend. Good night, Miss Ashton. Good night, Mr. Conway."

Jack, taking his seat beside Mildred, said:

"I got François and he says they have gone. I suppose they will all come piling in here and disturbing us in the middle of the act. Think of missing all this!"

"Well," laughed Mildred, "we've enjoyed it enough for all three of them, as well as for ourselves."

"I know *I* have," said Jack, emphatically, thrilled with her use of the word *ourselves*.

"Hush," whispered Mildred as the lights dropped.

The hum and chatter cease. Tosky looks up and down and round and round through the silent darkness. Then he faces his orchestra. Attention! "Tap, tap, tap" goes his long, white *bâton* against the stand. Tosky looks at the woodwind; and the woodwind announce *Day*, that motive which recurs during this act in so many forms. It is now accompanied with a *tremolo* on the string-quartet; then the 'cello speaks of *Impatience*, accompanied by broken triplets on the violin, which impart a feeling of restlessness; the old wail of *Desire* also returns, and again and again. Finally, all these melodies die away; sounds of distant hunting-horns are heard; and the curtain opens on a moonlit garden. The

horns grow fainter and fainter, and at last die away.

Brangäne, standing on the steps of the watch-tower, is listening to these dying echoes of King Mark's hunting-party. Isolde enters in great excitement.

How beautifully the clarinets and muted violins describe the weaving of the leaves, the murmur of the stream and all the sweet voices of this deliriously lovely summer night!

To a rushing chromatic scale, Isolde extinguishes the burning torch at the side of the broad steps. It is Tristan's signal! Now Isolde waves her scarf to eager rhythms from the woodwind. *Passionate Transport* and *Ardor*, excitedly given out from the orchestra, describe the feelings of the lovers, who rush into one another's arms, rapturously singing:

*"Bist du mein?
Hab' ich dich wieder?"*

And the orchestra, partaking of their rapture, gives a symphonic web of former motives.

"O cruel Day that has separated us! O benignant Night that brings us together!"

Night, intoxicating Night, weaves her spell around the lovers! Tristan leads Isolde to a flowery bank caressed by the moonlight. She reclines gracefully upon it; and Tristan falls on his knees beside her, softly singing:

*"O sink' hernieder
Nacht der Liebe."*

Isolde joins in

*"O Night of Rapture,
Rest upon us."*

Gentle sighs from the woodwind; syncopated chords from the muted strings; and mysterious sweeps from the harp create a poetic atmosphere. The orchestra seems flooded with moonlight and with Love!

"I think this is *so* beautiful," whispered Mildred, half-closing her eyes to listen to the exquisite melody of *Felicity*, which the violins and violas begin to weave in softest tones to the delicious bass furnished by the violoncello.

What wonder that the lovers should call upon death to unite them in this supreme moment!

Mildred, pointing with her gloved finger

here and there to some exquisite harmony, or graceful phrase, that she wanted Jack to notice, intensified his enjoyment already so keen. He was beginning to read the score with understanding and had all the enthusiasm of a neophyte.

The *Death-Song* now grows more passionate. The two voices mingle and blend into one.

"Yes; from this perfect night there should be no awakening!"

"Yes; let us die, while heart to heart and lip to lip!"

Now Brangäne rushes upon the scene to warn Isolde. Kurwenal also comes, sword in hand, to save Tristan. The hunting-horns of King Mark are heard approaching through the woven web of *Felicity*, *Death*, the *Death Potion* and *Day*; and then Isolde's tender voice is supported by the *Passionate Transport*.

"Oh, what instrumentation," Mildred murmurs.

"Wonderfull!" whispers Jack, in response, his eyes glued to the score.

"Hear the horns!" says Mildred.

Sir Melot and King Mark enter.

"Hear the *Death Song* in the orchestra,"

whispers Mildred; and, as rosy dawn begins to suffuse the scene and the bass-clarinet wails *King Mark's Grief and Consternation*, Mildred writes in pencil at the side of her score "bass clarinet."

"What did you do that for?" Jack whispers.

"I want to try to imitate the clarinet tone the next time I play it," Mildred explains.

Tristan, having listened to his uncle's reproaches, replies that he will return to his lonely birthplace in Brittany. Will Isolde follow?

Will she? Did she not follow him to Cornwall? He has only to tell her the way. Of course, Isolde will follow!

Oh, how tenderly Tristan kisses Isolde's brow! Oh, what inspired music!

Mildred points to the *Invocation of Night* and the *Song of Death*.

Jack leaned a little to the left over Mildred's shoulder. As he did so his right hand fell lightly on hers as it was resting on the music page. Then suddenly, without the least warning, prompted by a surging, uncontrollable impulse he seized her hand and holding it tightly, tenderly, he breathed in her ear: "I wish *we* might die together now, or that

this night should never end. Mildred! Mildred!"

Mildred, startled, looked up.

"Jack!" she gasped. "Oh, be careful!"

"Nobody sees us. Nobody is looking," he exclaimed, his voice quivering with eager emotion. "I love you, Mildred. Say you love me! Oh, say it, say it! Say it *now* to this glorious music!"

"Oh, don't—don't!" exclaimed Mildred. Her hand, held firm, remained in his. Carried away by his passionate appeal and excited by the stirring, emotional orchestra with its intoxicating rhythms and swing and sweep of melodies, Mildred grew faint and closed her eyes.

The marvelous music now seemed to become a personal expression of their emotions. Shocked as she was, Mildred sat still, silent and trembling. The friend she liked and cherished as a friend, had in this intense moment suddenly disclosed himself to her as a passionate lover. Was it some strange music madness; or were Love and Fate actually brewing their bitter cup for both of them?

Mildred, terribly moved, could say nothing—do nothing. Even through her glove

she could feel the crushing pressure of Jack's clasp. The rose that she was wearing quivered beneath her quickened breath.

A knock at the door brought Jack to his feet with a quick start. He opened it.

"Sorry to disturb you," whispered Gilbert Greene, "but I couldn't find an usher. Mrs. Conway and De Witt have gone to *Bunty Pulls the Strings*. They want us to join them at Sherry's for supper. How's the opera, Miss Ashton?"

"Wonderful," replied Mildred, calming herself with an effort.

And now a rushing movement of violins, violas and 'cellos describes Melot's attack on Tristan; the wounded Tristan sinks into the arms of his faithful squire; and Isolde, weeping, falls upon Tristan. The quick chord of D-minor ends the act; the curtain closes rapidly; the lights are turned up; and the whole house resounds again with applause and cries of "Bravo!" and "Brava!"

The singers have added to their laurels of the first act. They are recalled again and again. Immense wreaths and huge baskets of flowers are handed over the footlights. Serinsky now retires and returns with the real

star of the evening—Tosky, whose black figure in evening dress looks very small beside the gigantic Tristan in his mediæval costume.

“The men all behave like hired *claquers*,” said Greene; ‘but I needn’t say anything. See! I have burst my gloves. I did this in your service, Miss Ashton,” and Greene held out his left hand.

“I suppose that means,” said Mildred, “that I shall have to give you another pair.”

CHAPTER XIV

SOLITUDE

NO stranger musical phrase was ever written than the one that opens the third act of *Tristan and Isolde*. The violins, beginning on a low and loud note, creep up the scale in thirds and augmented fourths—strange intervals—until they end in a very high note, given very, very softly. It is a phrase full of despair, of fatality and of utter loneliness, which prepares the hearer for the desolate walls of Karéol, Tristan's castle in Brittany, on its lonely eminence overlooking the sea, where Tristan is lying under a tree dying of the wound received from Melot and attended by his faithful squire. A Shepherd is stationed on the breastworks at the top of the cliff to watch for the ship that is bringing Isolde. The tune that he plays on his pipe is known as *Sadness*. It is a familiar tune to Tristan, always associated with his sorrowing hours. He heard this tune on the evening

breeze when he was told of his father's death; he heard it in the morning mist when he learned of how his mother died; and he knows that it is connected with his own fate.

Sadness and *Solitude* reign over the dreary landscape and grip Tristan's heart. As he recalls happy hours with Isolde, the orchestra revives musical memories of the last beautiful night in Cornwall.

The great work with all its poetry and beauty must now gradually deepen into darkness. The night is coming from which there shall, indeed, be no awakening. Therefore, the terrible note of Fate sounds ever deeper and deeper until the climax is reached.

Isolde arrives only in time to see Tristan die. She soon follows him.

The last act of *Tristan* is not a cheerful one for lovers to witness.

To Gilbert Greene, who had never studied *Tristan*, this last act had always been intolerable. Not following the orchestra, it had always seemed to him that an hour is a long time to look upon and listen to a dying man on his couch in a dismal scene, raving over his absent love. He took a mild interest in Serinsky, whose acting was restrained and

polished, and at times, superb; but he thought that such delicate art as the famous Polish tenor possessed was wasted on this heroic *rôle*; and when Tristan struggled up and tore the bandage from his wound, Gilbert said to himself, "This is not to my taste! So unnecessary! So inartistic! So crude!"

The Shepherd's pipings impressed Gilbert as more melancholy than usual. Gilbert's present mood was melancholy; and the mournful English horn, which Wagner has made so much of in this act, cut very deep into his emotion. He found no beauty in it, but much pain. He had a strange, sinking feeling of utter and helpless despondency. The *Solitude*, with which Wagner has saturated this scene, crept into Gilbert's very soul; and he felt inexpressibly dreary and alone. Moreover, it was a new experience: he had never felt quite like this before. He began to wonder if any one in this great multitude of music-lovers was happy, and if any one in this great house was as depressed as he. This despair grew upon him until it mastered him completely. The dark fatality of the great music-drama threw its shadow across the footlights and enveloped Gilbert. Every time he heard

those plaintive wails from the vibrant strings, those calls of the heart from the liquid woodwind, and those sinister forebodings from the velvety horns, he was stabbed afresh.

Occasionally Gilbert lifted his opera-glass and swept the first two tiers of boxes; but most of the time his glance was fixed upon Mildred, who, unconscious that Gilbert was studying her, had been watching the stage all through the act.

Jack was following the score alone; or pretending to. He was very intent upon the pages. He rarely looked at the stage and never at Mildred.

Mildred, sitting gracefully in her chair, never moved: She watched the stage mechanically. Her face was a study.

The last sad tones of *Isolde* now died away. She fell on *Tristan's* body. *Passionate Transport* was again heard in the orchestra and the "star-crossed lovers" found companionship in death. *Confession of Love* and *Desire* again wailed forth; and the curtain closed to a last grieving chord.

A storm of applause greeted the artists. The house began to empty; but a few enthusiasts remained, beating their gloves to

pieces and lingering to see one more recall of Selma, Serinsky and Tosky.

All three in the Conway box now rose.

Gilbert Greene bowed to some friends in a neighboring box. Jack and Mildred's eyes met for a brief moment.

As Jack folded Mildred's cloak around her, he whispered, quoting from the Love Duet,

*"Mein und dein,
Immer ein,
Ewig, ewig ein!"*

Mildred, with downcast eyes, murmured:

"O wonne der Seele!"

"Rapture of spirit," Gilbert translated to himself, having overheard Mildred, who was now passing through the door of the box. He stooped to pick up the rose that she had unconsciously dropped and put it in his pocket. Then he slipped into his overcoat and joined Jack and Mildred.

"What a terribly long opera!" he said gaily. "Mrs. Conway and De Witt will have been waiting an hour for us at Sherry's. How did you like Isolde's swan-song, Miss Ashton?"

"I thought Selma was wonderful," replied Mildred.

Where did all these people come from! The corridors are crowded; the stairways are flowing with a continuous stream of people; the *foyer* is a mass of humanity. The air resounds with carriage calls; and for many blocks the Broadway cars are standing still in a long line. They are filling rapidly. Once in a while a bell rings sharply and one car moves slowly through the dense crowd. As far as the eye can reach it beholds a sea of glistening carriage tops, chiefly limousines, gathered around the Opera House,—a great swarm of black night beetles, with yellow, glowing eyes, waiting to convey their owners home.

No wonder the old Metropolitan took so long to empty to-night; for nearly the entire audience remained until the end of the performance.

The Conway car was soon called, and in a few minutes was waiting in the line at Fifth Avenue and Forty-fourth Street.

"How late you are!" exclaimed Louise, as they entered the supper-room. "Mr. De Witt and I were so famished that we couldn't

wait. So we have had our supper already."

"I am glad you have," replied Mildred. "You were probably more hungry than I am, for one. I want very little."

"*L'appétit vient en mangeant*," said Gilbert, handing her the menu. "Perhaps you can find something that will tempt you."

"Thank you," said Mildred; "I think I will just have some broiled mushrooms."

"And what else?"

"Nothing else, thank you, Mr. Greene."

"And I'll have the same," said Gilbert.

"And what will you have, Jack?"

"I'll have a club sandwich," Jack answered.

"And what will you have to drink, Miss Ashton?"

"Oh, whatever you like," replied Mildred.

"What are you going to have?"

"What would you like, Jack?"

"I'll have a cognac, thank you, and a strong cigar."

"I know you like sauterne, Miss Ashton. Shall we have a bottle of Grave?"

"Yes, thank you," said Mildred, "I think that would be very nice."

"Are you sure you won't have anything, Mrs. Conway?" Gilbert asked persuasively.

"Perfectly, thank you," Louise responded.

"And you, Mr. De Witt. Can't I induce you to join us in something?"

"Thank you, I will have a Chartreuse," replied De Witt.

"Oh, so will I," cried Louise; "that sounds so nice. Just what I want and didn't know it."

It was very late when the party rose from their table. When they reached the street they found that a thick mist had blown in from the sea. It was raw and cold.

In a few moments the limousine was before Mrs. Carroll's door. Gilbert, who happened to be sitting nearest the sidewalk, jumped out, gave his hand to Mildred and escorted her up the slippery steps, waiting until the door had closed behind her.

Mildred heard the whirr of the machine starting off as she groped her way up the three flights of stairs, almost in total darkness.

On entering her room she was a little startled to see her face in the glass: it looked so white and serious.

What a long, long time it seemed since she had dressed for dinner! It seemed a year ago!

She took off her dress and hung it on its padded silk hanger; slipped on a pale blue silk *kimono*; and removed the pins from her hair to rest her head, which she now discovered was aching. Then she sat down in her one easy chair and slowly and loosely braided her hair, which nearly touched the floor, thinking, thinking, thinking all the while.

What an eventful evening!

When she dressed to go to the Conways, she was serene and cheerful; now, as she was undressing, she was troubled and unhappy. Life now wore a new aspect,—and a very serious one.

She was much touched by the love of a man for whom she had entertained so deep a friendship; and she could have no doubt of the sincerity of Jack Conway's passion.

Her own sympathetic heart had responded to his outburst. What did that mean? Could it be that there was an answering note in her own heart? They had been comrades in study; their interests and tastes had brought them together; and during that glorious music, portraying the love of two of the world's most romantic lovers, it had been revealed to her that their hearts were in accord.

"But Jack is married!" said Mildred. "Married to one of my life-long friends. It is all wrong—wretchedly wrong! Love, which should have come trailing clouds of glory has come to me in tragic robes of black."

She rose from her chair and walked up and down for a few moments.

What was to be done? The horror of the situation grew upon her as her mind dwelt upon its possibilities. What a dreadful future it told for all concerned!

*"Mein und dein,
Immer ein,
Ewig, ewig ein"*

*"Mine and thine,
Ever one,
Ever, ever one"*

he had said! Her face burned again under the memory of it.

No, no, this must never be!

The bits of melody from the second act of *Tristan* that had been running through her head describing and emphasizing the delights of love, now ceased; and in their place she heard the strange ascending phrase of *Solitude*, climbing up, up, up into that infinity of

sadness and hopelessness. Yes; this *Solitude* and this sorrow that she had heard with such pangs a few hours ago was to be her destiny, too. In these dark meshes of Love and Fate her life must be enveloped and held fast forever.

Mildred looked around her little room. At this wretched moment it seemed pitifully poor and dreary. "Is this to be my life forever?" she said half aloud. "Am I to grow old here and forlorn like poor Miss Van Tassel? Is that all that I can look forward to?"

The very question made clear the course that she had resolved to follow. The sad-faced Spirit of Sacrifice was beckoning to her. Her pathway was plain before her.

Mildred walked to the window.

Dawn was breaking through the mists that were fast floating away in the fresh breeze. The faint yellow band at the horizon turned saffron and then pink. A tiny rim of glowing scarlet appeared through the clouds. The chain of lights that indicated the long span of the Queensboro Bridge faded from orange to the palest lemon and the cables and towers became sharper and sharper until the indistinct threads, hanging in mid-air like a filmy cob-

web, turned into a substantial thoroughfare. The red ball rolled up out of the clouds and burst into light.

“‘Let there be light,’” quoted Mildred, who was always awed by the dawn. “‘And there was light.’ And light has come to me!”

At this moment the little verse on the Sundial at *Wild Acres* came into Mildred’s mind:

I mark ye hours;
 Man notes ye time;
 Spite storme and showers
 Ye sun will shine.

“These lines seem to haunt me,” she said, “as the Shepherd’s melody haunted Tristan. I wonder why!”

And, as she gazed sorrowfully on the quiet city, still sleeping in the cold morning light, she heard again the plaintive violins voicing that strange climbing *Solitude*, with its poignant intervals, mounting up, up, up into an eternity of sorrow.

CHAPTER XV.

NOTES AND FLOWERS

MILDRED remained in her room the next morning, merely sending for Sai-dee to bring her a cup of coffee and some toast. The wearing emotional disturbance finally proved too much for her, and she dropped down upon her bed and fell asleep.

She was roused about noon by a knock at the door. This proved to be Oscar, who had brought her a note.

It was from Jack.

Dear Mildred:

There is nothing in the world for me now but you. You know what my life is, how unsympathetic Louise and I are, and how little she cares for me. I might add how little we care for each other and how separate our lives are. Louise is wrapped up in people, dress and fashion, and her dog; and I am wrapped up in you. You have come to mean everything to me—everything in the world.

I am so happy to feel that you do care for me and I

know there can be only one end to all this. Our lives must be united. It would be a relief to Louise, I am sure, if I were out of her life and she were free to marry De Witt, who is the only man I have ever seen her take a vital interest in. She cares for him, I think, as much as she can care for any one. Louise has her own independent fortune, so, you see, the money question need not trouble us.

Mildred, it is clear to me that we must belong to each other,—the sooner the better.

I will call for you this afternoon about four o'clock for a drive when we can talk over the whole question. Send a note back by the messenger, and tell me that you will go. Just a few words of assurance, Mildred. One word "yes" would be enough. It means all in life to me.

JACK.

Mildred sat at her desk for some time, her hands pressed tight to her throbbing brows. Then with a sudden little tragic gesture of resolution she caught up her pen and wrote:

Dear Jack:

I am sorry to disappoint you, but I can't possibly accept your invitation for this afternoon. I was awake until long after dawn and I have a very bad headache.

Please let us try to forget last night, and go back to where we were. We were good comrades and your companionship made me very happy. Can we not go back?

It costs me a great deal more to say this than you may realize; but when you think it over, you will agree with me.

MILDRED.

As she finished it suddenly came to Mildred that she was going to the Conways to dinner that evening for Mr. Greene's theatre-party. "I shall have to write to Louise and make an excuse," she said. "Fortunately, this headache will do."

Thereupon Mildred again took up her pen and wrote

Dear Louise:

I am so sorry that I can't come to-night to dine and be one of Mr. Greene's party for the "lively show" he has promised as an antidote to *Tristan*. I have a dreadful headache; and I shall not be able to leave my room all day.

Please make my excuses to Mr. Greene.

Hoping you will have a delightful evening and forget all about me, I am

Affectionately yours,

MILDRED.

Mildred sent this off at once. In about half an hour the telephone rang.

"This is Louise," was the answer to Mildred's inquiry, and then "Mildred, I am so

sorry to hear that you are ill. Can I do anything for you?" and then: "I am so disappointed that you can't be one of the party to-night. Mildred! how can I entertain three men without your help, one of them being Jack! You don't know what a bore Jack is when you are not here. Good-bye."

The Conway dinner-table presented quite a contrast to the one of the night before. Every one missed Mildred's vivacious presence.

Louise, in her severe black velvet and pearls and with her cold manner, had no foil to-night with the bright-faced Mildred missing. There was practically no conversation. Jack was as silent as Mr. De Witt and Gilbert Greene's attempts to enliven the dull party fell on stony ground. He gave them up as early as the *entrée*. The courses were barely tasted; and François found himself in an incredibly short time serving the coffee, liqueurs, cigars and cigarettes.

Smoking was the first thing the men seemed to enjoy. Louise also found relief in the cigarette that Phil De Witt lit for her. After a few puffs—she smoked gracefully—Louise came to the rescue. "We are all dead tired

to-night," she said. "Suppose we give up the theatre and play cards instead."

"Hooray!" cried Gilbert.

"Happy thought!" cried Phil De Witt.

"Louise, that was an inspiration!" cried Jack.

Therefore, while Mildred was picturing to herself the familiar party hurrying off to the theatre, for a delightful evening (all but Jack, for she could imagine how despondent he must be) her friends were sitting in the Conway drawing-room around the card-table intent upon auction bridge.

Mildred was so frequently absent from Mrs. Carroll's dinner-table that her empty place this evening called forth no surprise until Mrs. Carroll said something to her neighbor about Miss Ashton being ill to-night. Immediately a wave of concern passed from seat to seat. Mr. Charles J. Williams swallowed his coffee in one gulp and left the table. The sound of the front door shutting immediately afterwards told the rest of the boarders that he had gone out. Miss Van Tassel climbed at once to Mildred's room; and Mildred responded to her knock and invited her to come in. Miss Van Tassel was soon seated

in Mildred's easy chair by the side of the bed, where Mildred lay, her aching head propped on the pillows. With great effort she feigned interest in Miss Van Tassel's stories of the old New York days when she was a beauty and a belle.

Miss Van Tassel was of use, however, for she saved Mildred the pain and trouble of getting up to open the door. Miss Van Tassel was not only glad to be of service to Mildred, but she was delighted to be the only one who could see all that was happening.

Saidee's first knock was to deliver a long bundle of oily white paper, which contained a large bunch of pink carnations, to which the card of Mr. Charles J. Williams was tied with several yards of wide pink satin ribbon.

Saidee's second knock brought one pink rose, unwrapped, and a curiously twisted strip of note paper, which Mildred unfolded—she had never seen anything like it before—to discover a missive from Bernard Fogg, to bring his hopes for a speedy recovery. The third knock revealed Cora.

Cora, having heard the news in the kitchen

when she went to get her own dinner, lost no time in informing the two Miss Swanns that Miss Ashton was ill. Whereupon, Miss Jessie picked up a bottle of headache cologne and the bunch of fresh violets she had intended to wear to a concert and said: "Cora, take these to Miss Ashton, with our compliments, and be sure to find out how she is and if there is anything we can do for her."

Cora had no sooner gone than Saidee returned with a box from a Fifth Avenue florist containing a deliciously fragrant bunch of lilies-of-the-valley with the card of Mr. Gilbert Greene lying on top of them.

If the sender could have seen Mildred's pleasure as her eyes fell upon them and her words, "These are my favorite flowers, Miss Van Tassel. I can hear the little perfumed bells ring,—can't you?" he would have been more than delighted.

Mildred was quite touched with all these attentions.

"You really are a belle," said Miss Van Tassel. "You do remind me so much of myself when I was your age."

Then the last little withered leaf of the Van

Tassel tree began again her stories of social triumphs.

"Please take your choice of the flowers, Miss Van Tassel," said Mildred, when her guest rose to go.

"Oh, no!" said Miss Van Tassel, "they were not intended for me."

"But I want you to," said Mildred. "Please do."

"I'll take the pink rose, then, if you insist," said Miss Van Tassel. "Thank you, Miss Ashton, you are so generous."

Mildred was very glad her choice had fallen upon Mr. Bernard Fogg's offering.

As the door closed behind Miss Van Tassel, Mildred took the screwed-up note and looked at the creases made by the intricate folding. "Why couldn't he have sent his card," said Mildred, "or, at least, put his note into an envelope."

With that she tore the missive into numerous little pieces and threw them into the wastebasket.

"No," she said, after a minute, stooping to fish every one of them out, although her head was throbbing violently. "I want to get rid of every piece—every particle."

Then, raising the window, she threw them out, delighted to see the bits of white paper fluttering away upon the cool, night breeze.

CHAPTER XVI

A BALL AT THE PLAZA

AS Mildred had not appeared at the Conways for a week, Louise, who had been expecting her each day, allowed the time to slip away; but when she realized that Mildred had not been to dinner since the *Tristan* night, she feared something must be the matter. This fact dawned upon her one day when she was shopping; and she, therefore, decided to stop at Mrs. Carroll's and learn what was the trouble.

Mildred happened to be in and was more than glad to see her.

"Why haven't you been to dine with us?" Louise asked as Mildred entered the parlor.

"I haven't been at all well lately, Louise," Mildred answered.

"That's not a good reason. If you were ill, all the more reason why you should have come to us. Gilbert Greene has missed you; Jack has missed you; and I have missed you. I al-

ways have a double reason for missing you," Louise laughed cynically, "because it puts Jack over on my hands. When you aren't present, he is indifferent to everything and everybody—so bored! He is a perfect killjoy! I never saw anything like him! I do wish you would come and cheer him up,—cheer us all up, in fact. We are suffering from the blues, blues of every shade and every degree. Can't you go home with me now? Or, if you don't want to hurry dressing, I'll call for you in half an hour. Come along!"

"I can't possibly come this evening, Louise. I have some writing to do to-night. Thank you ever so much, but I can't."

"Well, then, we'll expect you to-morrow night."

"No," said Mildred, "I am afraid I shall not get through with what I have to do to-night."

"But you've all day to-morrow," said Louise; "I shall begin to think that you don't want to come."

"Hardly that," replied Mildred.

"Well, then, I'll tell you what we will do," Louise answered. "I have tickets for the ball at the Plaza Friday night. You must come

to dinner, and we'll all go. Phil De Witt and Gilbert Greene are coming. I suppose I really ought to ask another woman, but I'd rather just have you."

Mildred, beginning to think that it might be wiser to accept Louise's cordial invitation than to allow her to wonder at her persistent refusals, promised to come; and Louise, satisfied at having carried her point, gave Mildred a bird-like kiss on the cheek, tripped down the steps and stepped lightly into her car.

"Now, this is not an easy thing to do," said Mildred, "but I shall have to go. I know I can depend on Jack when all the others are present and I will be careful to avoid a *tête-à-tête*."

Mildred was right. She could depend on Jack; for when Louise told him that Mildred was coming to dine on Friday, he received the news with a calm exterior and resolved not to embarrass Mildred in any way.

Mildred was very particular to arrive late so that the party would be gathered in the drawing-room when she entered. They were all waiting for her. Louise greeted her warmly; and so did Mr. Greene and Mr. De Witt. Jack also shook her hand cordially but

with a great effort towards formality, which De Witt's sharp eyes noticed. De Witt was a silent, but very observant, man.

François was in high feather to-night. He had plenty of time to serve the dinner. The party lingered long in delightful conversation over every course; for Mildred's presence had the effect of sunshine after a long rainy season. She made it a point never to look at Jack, a little omission that Phil De Witt also noted. She, however, was able to talk entertainingly and the others also brightened up amazingly. Louise was very cheerful; and even the usually quiet De Witt told two good stories that he had just heard at his Club.

"We are just in good time," said Louise, as she came down the stairs after dinner in her evening wrap. "I do hate to be early anywhere."

"We sha'n't be early to-night," said De Witt, who was hurrying into his coat.

Mildred's wrap was lying in the small reception-room on the other side of the hall. As she went to get it, Jack followed her. He held it up and as he folded it around her the memory of *Tristan* came back. Again he whispered:

*"Mein und dein
Immer ein
Ewig, ewig ein."*

But the words he longed to hear from Mildred were unspoken. She hurried out of the door that François was holding open and into the limousine, in which Louise was already seated.

The corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street is beautiful at every season of the year and at all times of day and night. The long lines of streets, the tall, handsome hotels—the Plaza, the Savoy and the Netherland—the Metropolitan Club, the Vanderbilt Mansion and other stately private houses and Central Park, which these fine buildings face, present a magnificent city view.

One stands here as one stands at Hyde Park Corner, or at the Marble Arch, in London, to see the elegant world go by.

This spot is particularly fine at twilight when the soft blue light falls upon the green sward of the Park and its darker trees, and upon the streets, enveloping everything in a delicate mist through which the lights begin to appear from street lamps and from all the large buildings. The Plaza, with its pic-

turesque roof bristling with windows of various shapes and sizes, gains at this hour the effect of a fairy castle.

This corner was so picturesque on this night that our party remarked upon it as the Conway limousine took its place in line as far away from the Plaza as Fifth Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street. A light snow had been falling for several hours and had powdered the streets with a delicate, sparkling dust. It had also powdered the trees in the Park. In places where the light from the street lamps and the long cones of golden light from automobile lamps fell upon it the soft snow sparkled. The fine and delicate flakes that filled the air—for the snow was still falling—made the very atmosphere scintillate. Through the soft whiteness of the night the lights gleamed from the tall hotels in every shade from deepest ruby to orange and palest lemon. A long line of lighted cars was congested along Fifty-ninth Street and carriages and limousines packed Fifth Avenue so closely that there was hardly space for another; yet another, and still another, was always coming. So the long lines lengthened and broadened, although at the entrance of the Plaza arriv-

ing carriages delivered their occupants and got out of the way to make room for those that were gradually approaching.

How bright the Plaza was inside! How full it was already! The elevators were carrying load after load of dancers to the ball-room; and more and more were constantly coming. The women, removing their wraps in the dressing-room, found their escorts waiting for them and together they ascended the wide stairways, or took the elevator.

The halls and stairways were beautifully decorated with flowers; potted plants were placed so as to form a fine decorative effect; and from every room, large and small, an orchestra was playing, to which people were dancing.

As the Conway party entered the ball-room, the orchestra was playing a very charming Hesitation Waltz. De Witt and Louise started off at once. Many of the spectators in the boxes noticed, even on this floor of beautifully dressed women, Louise's dress of shimmering silver, which caught the light so beautifully as she took the rhythms with easy steps and well-poised head.

Gilbert Greene asked Mildred to dance;

and off they glided, both being graceful dancers. Jack, seeing some friends, walked across the floor, dodging the dancers, and drew a grateful partner from a little group, in which the women outnumbered the men.

"Mr. Greene," said Mildred as they danced along, "I haven't yet had a chance to thank you in person for those lovely lilies-of-the-valley you sent me. How did you know that they are my favorite flowers?"

"I didn't know, but I know now," replied Greene. "If you ever get ill again, I will send you some more. Only, please don't get ill again."

"No, I haven't the slightest idea of doing so," said Mildred.

The next dance was a one-step. Jack, advancing, claimed Mildred for this. After dancing a while in silence, Jack said, "Mildred, was your letter final?"

"Yes, Jack," she answered.

"Well, then," said Jack, his face growing hard, "you don't love me."

"Oh, I do!" protested Mildred, with a kind of earnestness that showed Jack only too clearly that it was not the kind of love that his heart hungered for.

"No, you don't," he repeated quickly and bitterly.

"Why—"

"No, you don't. If you did, you wouldn't give me up. You are cold—cold as ice."

"I? Cold?" exclaimed Mildred, in surprise and greatly hurt.

"Yes. You don't love me. *I* know it—you don't."

Deeply wounded, Mildred answered, "It is terribly hard to give you up. I can't bear to have to let you go. You don't know, Jack, what your companionship has been to me. I have missed our walks and our talks and our music. I am very lonely. I miss you dreadfully."

The music ceased. Jack and Mildred now joined De Witt, who was standing by the door alone, waiting for Louise and Gilbert to sail into his port.

"Shall we go to supper now?" asked Louise.

"No, one more dance for me, please," said De Witt; "here is the Hesitation again. Come on."

"Shall we try this, Miss Ashton?" asked Gilbert.

"With pleasure," Mildred replied; and off they went to "*Mighty Lak' a Rose*."

Jack Conway watched Mildred and Greene dancing so lightly together in such perfect step and looking so well, so handsome and so perfectly suited to one another; and he said to himself, bitterly:

"Greene's the man Mildred loves and she doesn't know it! There is no doubt about the state of Greene's feelings. It is as plain as day. I wonder if Mildred will throw Greene down? He is the man she loves. My God! but life is hard for me!"

"That was a delightful dance, Mr. Greene," said Mildred, as she and her partner joined the others. "I enjoyed it so much!"

"So did I," replied Gilbert.

"Yes, you did," thought Jack, looking at Mildred's brightly shining eyes and her rich color heightened by the exercise; "there's no doubt about *that*. If you felt as I do, you would not look like that, Mildred. Yes, I am perfectly sure that you do not love me. You are still very much of a child, Mildred; you are not yet awake!"

To a casual observer looking down from a

height upon a midnight supper in one of the big New York hôtels and noting the vast crowd of beautifully dressed women, sparkling with jewels and wafting in the tropical warmth the choicest and most delicate of perfumes at every turn of their heads, bodies and gloved hands; at the well-dressed and well-groomed men, seated at the hundreds of little tables, around which the waiters thread their way so marvellously to bring tempting and beautifully decorated dishes; at the exhibition dancers; at the lights; and at the flowers; and hearing the popping of champagne corks; the chatter of voices with laughter occasionally cutting through the din; and the intoxicating syncopated rhythms of the insidious music, he would imagine that nothing but joy and happiness reigned in the heart and breast of every one present, apparently taking life so lightly, so gaily, so carelessly.

Far from it!

Our little table was no exception. Probably not one person in these great rooms where thousands were eating, drinking and making merry, was perfectly happy. Our group was outwardly as merry as the rest. Who could have thought otherwise? Louise,

in her casing of silver mail that fit her slender figure as if she had been melted into it and with a tall silver and pink aigrette fastened into her dark hair with a diamond pin; Mildred, in her canary silk with her rich topaz ornament, now drawing off her gloves and handing them to Gilbert Greene to take care of for her; and these three perfectly groomed men, correct in every detail as to costume, also taking off their gloves, appeared to represent a party of enviable persons to whom the world has given all that it has to give.

They represented, however, what Life and Fate can do to make matters complicated and distressful for five persons.

What tangled threads of Destiny were caught in the same mesh,—a mesh woven, not by any one of the group, but by Fate—inexorable Fate!

Not only around the table of our friends, but around every table in this crowded and brilliant supper-room, the voice of Fate, like the rumble of distant thunder, could have been heard by any ear delicate enough to discern it and intelligent enough to understand the meaning of the long, deep, heavy and muttering roll.

CHAPTER XVII

AN AFTERNOON CALL

PHILIP DE WITT was a strange, silent man. One never knew what he was thinking, or planning. His black eyes that looked out from rather heavy brows were sharp and keen and a trifle hard. They changed little, too, as he talked. Their brilliancy seemed to come from without, instead of from within. Philip De Witt's eyes were certainly not torches of the soul; for Philip De Witt had very little soul. He had gone through life and had reached the age of forty without experiencing many emotions save those inspired by a very high temper.

If Philip De Witt had been forced to have made his living unaided, he would either have had to warm up a little to the world, or to have become an instant failure. Coming of a well-connected family, he had, after graduation from Princeton, been given a position in an insurance company, where he drew a

moderate salary for a very small amount of work. This suited Mr. De Witt. His salary barely enabled him to make both ends meet, particularly as he had luxurious tastes and habits. He made every penny of his expenditure count, and, therefore, appeared to have more money than he had. He lived near the University Club and dined out a great deal. Though not popular, he was able to "fit well" into society anywhere and at any time. He was an excellent, though not especially graceful, dancer; he played cards well; he was always ready for anything; and he was an attentive listener. He never broke into a conversation, nor spoiled another man's story. His watchfulness and little courtesies to the fair sex and his polite attentions to his hostess, whoever she might be, accounted, in part, for his numerous invitations.

Phil De Witt had never cared much about marrying, except for the pecuniary advantages it might bring to him. A wife without money was a catastrophe too intolerable to consider. He had been one of the moths that had flittered around Louise Steele; for he admired her more than any girl he had ever met.

Louise, however, had preferred Jack Conway with money to Philip De Witt without money, just as she would have preferred Philip De Witt with money to Jack Conway without it, had the case been reversed. Now that she was tied to Jack, she preferred Phil De Witt; and if she had been tied to Phil De Witt, by this time she would, no doubt, have been turning her thoughts to Jack Conway.

One day at the Club De Witt had overheard a man ask, "Who is that chap over there with the Van Dyke beard? Looks like a painter!" This gave Mr. De Witt a tip. He allowed his hair, which was slightly wavy, to grow a trifle longer than hair is usually worn; and this, with his pointed beard and moustache, gave him the romantic appearance he desired. He was, therefore, frequently taken for a professional man, which pleased him.

It did not take long for Mr. De Witt to discover the little rift within the lute at the Conways. Naturally, he was one of the first callers at the Madison Avenue house, and one of the first dinner-guests. He was too clever not to make himself an established and regular member of the Conway dinner parties.

From the more formal dinners, he graduated to the small, informal ones; and he was also in the habit of dropping in on Friday afternoons when Louise had her receptions. Sunday afternoons he always spent at the Conways; and he usually remained to dinner.

The past few weeks had revealed to Mr. De Witt the great opportunity of his life. He had long determined to make himself essential to Louise. Mr. De Witt was very tired of the insurance business and it was growing every day more difficult to reach Pine Street by ten o'clock. Moreover, he enjoyed being with Louise. He admired the way she dressed; the way she carried herself; her manners; and her cynicism. He also admired the way she entertained and he liked her coldness and her self-possession. He had welcomed Mildred's advent into the group and the effect she had upon Jack delighted him. His was the mind that had directed Louise to encourage the friendship between her old friend and her husband. It suited Mr. De Witt's purpose. Something might be made of this. Mr. De Witt saw a great and promising opening for his plans.

"I hope Louise hasn't gone to a *matinée*

this afternoon," he said, when he returned from his office the day after the ball; "I'll try it anyway." Mr. De Witt, therefore, walked the short distance from the Club to the Madison Avenue house. He was soon made happy to hear from François that Mrs. Conway was at home.

Louise sent for him to come upstairs into the Louis Seize drawing-room, where she was half-reclining on a *chaise-longue*, her pale green *crêpe-de-chine* tea-gown blending artistically with the pink and white striped upholstery of the sofa and falling in voluminous folds to the floor.

Louise, after telling François that she would receive Mr. De Witt here, glanced into the mirror opposite; and, noticing that her pose was graceful, did not stir as her visitor entered. Holding out her hand, she said smilingly: "I thought you would come this afternoon; that's why I didn't go out. Draw up a chair. No; not *that* one! Take a more comfortable one. No; not *that*, either. Bring the arm-chair. Yes; now you are all right. You men are so silly. You never know how to make yourselves comfortable. What would you do without us?"

"We wouldn't do," replied Mr. De Witt, fitting his back into the curves of the chair and sinking complacently into its downy depths. "Ah! this *is* comfortable!"

"Now, if you light a cigarette," said Louise, handing him the little silver tray that stood on the small table near her, with its pile of cigarettes and convenient match-box, "your happiness will be complete."

"Not entirely," said Mr. De Witt.

"Ungrateful man!" exclaimed Louise. "What more can you want? And with me to entertain you, too! Here, give me one of your cigarettes. I like them so much better than my own. Thank you! Now, then, we can talk. Prepare to be brilliant, Phil, and tell me a story as good as either one of those you told last night. I wish you would talk more. You are always clever when you do talk; but you are so outrageously quiet, as a rule."

"I'm not going to talk while you are caressing that little beast of a dog," said Mr. De Witt.

"Oh, indeed!" laughed Louise. "Love me, love my dog!" and with that she stopped stroking her little Pekinese, and holding him

up to her face kissed him violently, talking as follows:

"Darling Pompon, don't listen to that nasty man (*kiss-kiss*). Don't let him hurt your dear little feelings (*kiss-kiss*). We'll send him away, if he talks like this (*kiss-kiss*). Yes, Pompon darling, he's a horrid, nasty, big and burly brute of a man (*kiss-kiss*)."

"Louise, you make me sick!" said Mr. De Witt, flicking the ashes from his cigarette.

Louise laughed, "Why don't you go home, then?"

"I would if I hadn't come to talk over something important."

"Oh, I hate important things!" cried Louise. "Let's be frivolous. That's the trouble with you, you are always so serious."

"Things are growing serious," said Mr. De Witt.

"What do you mean, Phil?" asked Louise in a changed voice, raising her eyebrows and looking thoughtfully at the cigarette between her beautifully manicured and jeweled fingers.

"This is what I mean," he replied. "I'll put it in the form of a question. Have you noticed Jack's interest in Mildred Ashton?"

"Why, of course," replied Louise, "that's nothing new. You're in an antediluvian mood. You're horrid this afternoon. First, you are cross to my darling Pompon and then you quote ancient history. Two crimes within ten minutes! What will you do next?"

"Louise, be serious for a moment and listen to me. It's important. I think Jack's and Mildred's attachment can be made useful to us,—do you understand?"

Louise laid her cigarette on the tray.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I needn't put it any plainer. You're over twenty-one."

"Oh, no!" she said. "Not Mildred. Mildred never would allow anything of the kind."

"She wouldn't!" retorted Mr. De Witt, ironically. "Humph!"

"No, not Mildred Ashton. I know her too well."

"I know better," said Mr. De Witt. "Mildred Ashton is in love with Jack, and Jack's in love with her. They've got an understanding between them. Let us make the most of it."

"Oh, Phil!" exclaimed Louise, reproachfully.

"I can bring you proofs," said he, "and I will."

"Oh, you are mistaken, Phil," said Louise. "Mildred is my friend. Even if I were to divorce Jack—as we have so often talked about—she would never consent to marrying a *divorcé*. I know her views. I have heard her talk. Moreover, I know her character. Besides," she added, "Mildred is going to marry Gilbert Greene."

"Who said so?" asked Mr. De Witt.

"Nobody."

"Then how do you know?" asked Mr. De Witt.

"How idiotic you are! Don't ask a woman to explain how she knows anything, or nothing. We know things intuitively—we have a peculiar sense of intuition—and I know—but I don't know how I know—that Mildred Ashton is going to marry Gilbert Greene."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. De Witt.

"Phil, I thought you had sharp eyes and saw everything. Do you mean to say that you

haven't noticed how crazy Gilbert Greene is over Mildred?"

"No," said Phil De Witt. "Greene always behaves like that with all women. I don't see anything unusual in his attentions to Mildred."

"I see something very unusual in the look in his eyes for her. He doesn't look at me, for instance, with that love-light that he has for Mildred. I tell you, Phil, Gilbert Greene is in love with Mildred; and she is in love with him and doesn't know it."

"What rot you are talking, Louise! How could such a thing be possible? That's nonsense, perfect nonsense!"

"No, it isn't," said Louise. "Jack thinks so, too. He said so when we got home from the ball last night."

"Jack said *that!*" cried Mr. De Witt. "Humph! I tell you Mildred Ashton is in love with Jack. That's the reason why she stayed away from this house for so long. I noticed it at supper at Sherry's that night after the opera. They were both agitated when they came in; they didn't eat anything; and they didn't look at one another. Then, at din-

ner last night they carefully avoided one another's eyes; and Jack went out of his way to be unnecessarily gracious to Mildred."

"There's nothing in it," said Louise. "I tell you that if Mildred doesn't love Gilbert Greene now, she will in time. *I* know women. What do you think! I'm one, myself."

"Well, at any rate," said De Witt, "we could use it. I have several little bits of evidence that would be very annoying even to an expert lawyer: he would have much to prove."

"No," said Louise, "Phil, I won't let you use Mildred in this matter. I have told you that if the right time comes when I can get a divorce—comfortably—I may marry you. There is no especial hurry. The time will come. I think Jack will go away—I think he is planning to go now—and desertion would be quite good enough. Oh, good heavens! it's six o'clock! Phil, you must go. Jack and I are dining out to-night. I have barely time to dress. Run along, Phil. Come here and kiss Pompon good-bye: he wants to forgive you for being so horrid and to show that he bears you no malice."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," replied Mr. De Witt, indignantly, as he rose.

"Come in to-morrow at the same time," said Louise, kissing Pompon's little silky ears.

"I don't know whether I will, or not," replied Mr. De Witt, leaving the room without looking back.

"I know you will," Louise called after him.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN WASHINGTON

MILDRED was only too glad that she had accepted the invitation of the two Miss Swanns to accompany them to Washington to the Twenty-first Continental Congress of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She thought the little trip and the change of scene might restore her nerves, which had been so shaken. She was delighted, therefore, when the appointed day came for their departure.

On arriving in Washington, the four travelers (for Cora was included, of course) were soon comfortably settled in the New Willard Hotel, prepared to spend the forthcoming week. They met so many friends and received so many callers that Sunday passed like a dream.

Miss Hatty Swann went to the preliminary meeting on Monday morning; but Miss Jessie suggested that she should take Mildred sight-seeing. Consequently, Mildred and Miss Jes-

sie spent the morning visiting the Capitol and other public buildings and joined Miss Hatty at luncheon, after which all three went to the formal opening of the Congress.

Memorial Continental Hall struck Mildred as imposing. The auditorium was a fine sight with its decorations of flags and spring flowers and the large assemblage of well-dressed women. The insignia of the Daughters was placed above the stage; and at the back of the stage hung three impressive historical paintings.

Very soon after Mildred and her hostesses were seated, President Taft entered through the Memorial South Portico and took his place on the platform, where the officers of the society and their distinguished guests were already grouped. At the same moment the big flag was unfurled from the centre of the domed ceiling, while the two thousand women with their men guests waved their handkerchiefs in greeting and the Marine Band, stationed in the adjoining Museum, added to the general excitement by playing patriotic airs.

President Taft made a genial speech, in which he laid emphasis on the pleasure he had

of welcoming the beauties of the Spring and the beauties of the Daughters together. He reminded the latter that they had gathered to stimulate the memories of, and the respect for, those men who made this nation possible and who laid broad its foundation in the Constitution of the United States; and that one of the motives for the existence of the society was to uphold the principles of that Constitution and to insist on their preservation as long as the nation shall endure.

Then followed the address by the President-General, Mrs. Matthew T. Scott, which gave Mildred a more definite idea of the significance of the society than she had previously had.

Mildred had never attended an assembly of this kind; and every detail of the procedure interested her, as well as the addresses. The two Miss Swanns presented their guest to many of the ladies, whose faces Mildred remembered when she saw them again that evening at the large reception given in Memorial Hall.

At the meeting next day, when various gifts were presented to the Museum, such as John Hancock's desk, a lamp from the Battleship

Maine and a loving-cup that General Washington had given to Mrs. Alexander, Mildred turned to Miss Hatty Swann and said: "I think I will contribute something, too. I have a great many Revolutionary relics at home. There is an old powder-horn that belonged to Light Horse Harry Lee; I have my great-great-grandfather's sword and his blue and buff uniform; I have two or three old costumes,—and I don't know what else besides. I should like to have some of my family things here."

"Why don't you?" Miss Hatty replied. "I think that is a splendid idea," and then turning to her sister, "Jessie," said Miss Hatty, "we have brought in a valuable member. Miss Ashton is going to give some relics to the Museum."

Miss Jessie, leaning forward, looked at Mildred and smiled. "I knew she would become one of us," she said.

As the other meetings were devoted to business matters, Mildred preferred to continue her sight-seeing. Her hostesses, therefore, left her to her own devices.

On Thursday morning, as she was crossing Fourteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue,

she heard a voice behind her exclaim in a tone of surprise: "Why, Miss Ashton, how do you do?"

"Why, Mr. Greene!" Mildred exclaimed with a smile. "Where did you come from?"

"New York," he answered. "Yesterday. What are you doing here?"

"I came with some friends—the two Miss Swanns—to the Congress of the Daughters of the American Revolution. We arrived on Saturday. What are *you* doing here?"

"Oh, I came down on business," replied Gilbert. "I am going to build a house on New Hampshire Avenue for a western Senator; and I ran down to look at the site."

"When are you going back to New York?"

"I was going," Gilbert replied, "this afternoon at three o'clock; but I have changed my mind since I have met you. I don't know when I shall go now. How long are you going to be here?"

"Until Saturday," answered Mildred; "but we are going to spend Sunday in Baltimore."

"Where are you going now?" Gilbert inquired. "But wait a minute before you answer," he continued, taking hold of her arm gently and leading her to the sidewalk, "if you

stand in this dangerous place, you won't be going anywhere."

"You'd better say I'll be taking a long journey," laughed Mildred, "to

'The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns.'

It *is* a dangerous spot."

"It's as bad as anything in New York," said Gilbert, "particularly as you are not apt to be on your guard here. You are not going to be run over while *I* am with you."

"Then I suppose I can be run over as much as I like when you are not with me? Is that it?" queried Mildred.

"I should think once would satisfy you," replied Gilbert. "But that once is not going to be to-day, anyhow. Come, let us go into Lafayette Square and look at the fine, old trees. It is such a beautiful square! I remember it as long as I can remember anything. I used to visit relatives in Washington when K, H, and I Streets were the chief centres of fashionable life and Washington was a little place."

"It's my first visit," said Mildred.

"Oh, is it? Have you seen all the sights?"

"The principal ones," Mildred answered.

"Can't I take you somewhere that you haven't been?" asked Gilbert. "What about Arlington? Suppose I call for you this afternoon and we'll motor down."

"I'd love to go," said Mildred, "but I have an engagement. We are going to President and Mrs. Taft's reception to the Daughters."

"How about to-morrow?"

"Yes; I can go to-morrow."

"All right, then," answered Gilbert. "We'll go to-morrow. I'll call for you about three o'clock. Aren't those forsythias lovely? They are quite special to Washington: they are all over the city. I love them."

"Yes," answered Mildred. "I was struck with them the first thing."

"This is the time to see Washington," said Gilbert. "Spring in Washington is perfect."

The four-mile drive to Arlington on Friday afternoon was delightful. The great white dome of the Capitol in the distance was the chief feature of the landscape and reminded Gilbert and Mildred all the while that they were in Washington. The house with its massive columns impressed the New York visitors as noble but melancholy and wonderfully

adapted to its present purpose. The desolation of the rooms, devoid of furniture and life, depressed them both.

As they wandered about the beautiful grounds on this sunny April afternoon, the sound of a muffled drum was heard and soon the Marine Band was seen advancing along the road with slow tread marked by the solemn measures of Chopin's *Funeral March*.

"Why," exclaimed Gilbert, "this must be the ceremonial *cortège* for General Phil Kearney. I had forgotten that his body was to be brought to Arlington this afternoon. Do you want to stay?"

"Why, yes," replied Mildred, "we might stand here for a moment and watch the procession."

"Here's a shady spot, then," Gilbert answered. "It is awfully hot. There is a little breeze here. The papers said that President Taft was to make an address. I think that is he in that carriage just entering the driveway."

They stood in silence until the band and the carriages had passed. Then Gilbert asked: "Do you have to be back at any particular time?"

"No," said Mildred. "I have no engagement for this evening."

"Then we will take a little longer drive."

"I'll be delighted to, Mr. Greene," Mildred responded.

"It must have been a pleasure to you, Miss Ashton, to have seen the old Lee house," said Gilbert, as the motor whirled out of the grounds.

"*Arlington* isn't the Lee homestead, Mr. Greene," Mildred replied. "It is the Custis house. It was the home of George Washington Parke Custis, whose daughter married General Robert E. Lee. Their wedding took place here. The Lee homestead is *Stratford*, in Westmoreland County. Light Horse Harry was my ancestor."

"How strange!" exclaimed Gilbert. "Light Horse Harry Lee was a fellow-soldier and great friend of my ancestor, General Greene—General Nathanael Greene."

"Are you descended from General Greene?" asked Mildred.

"Yes," replied Gilbert.

"Then I shall say how strange, too," said Mildred. "To think that our ancestors were friends!"

"Light Horse Harry Lee died on General Greene's estate, or his daughter's, I forget which, in Georgia. Perhaps you remember that General Greene had estates given to him in Georgia and South Carolina. He was devoted to *Mulberry Grove*. Anthony Wayne, 'Mad Anthony Wayne,' had the plantation next to him."

"Isn't it strange," said Mildred, "to think that we have known each other for several months and never discovered that we had Revolutionary ancestors who were friends. We might call ours an inherited friendship. We are quite historical,—aren't we?"

"You see," replied Gilbert, "occasions like these patriotic gatherings bring out such things. People naturally talk of their ancestors and interesting coincidences are brought to light."

"Yes; and other curious things happen," said Mildred. "For instance, I witnessed a very nice little scene the other day in Memorial Hall. The meeting had come to an end and we were on the platform, where many of the ladies had gathered to speak to their friends. One of them was making some remarks about three large paintings of histori-

cal scenes on the wall at the back of the stage—suddenly a gentleman rose from a seat in the hall and said politely to one of the Daughters, 'Perhaps, madam, it might interest you to know that the artist is here. Allow me to introduce Mr. Millard Brown.' An elderly lady, overhearing this, stepped forward and said: 'Why, as I am alive, it is Millard Brown.' She extended an eager hand. 'Don't you remember me, Millard—and the old art days in Paris, thirty-four years ago?' The old white-haired gentleman rose and looked into the lady's face, with an embarrassed and uncertain expression. Then suddenly his memory lighted up. 'Why yes, yes!' he exclaimed. 'It is Martha Trowbridge. Bless me—my dear. You are alive and well, and I haven't seen you or your good people these many, many years.' He was very much overcome—in fact they both were. He took both of her hands in his. Then he said 'How strange to meet again and in this way!' Their eyes were full of tears. Wasn't that extraordinary?"

"It only proves once again, that life is stranger than fiction," Gilbert observed thoughtfully.

"I wonder," Mildred mused, "if you would know me if thirty-four years were to pass without our seeing each other and we were to meet unexpectedly like that."

"I think so," replied Gilbert, emphatically. "Only I would never let thirty-four years go by without seeing you. \ That's too long between calls."

"Perhaps we have another binding link in the Revolution," said Mildred. "My great-great-grandfather, Major Ashton, fought under General Washington, too. He was in the retreat from Long Island; but I don't know whether he served under Putnam, or Greene."

"That is interesting, too," replied Gilbert.

"I must look through my family papers," said Mildred. "It would be strange if I were to find some letters from your ancestor, to my great-great-grandfather among them."

"Yes, it would," Gilbert agreed.

"I am going home when I return to New York; and, if I should find anything, I will send it to you. I wish you could see my old house, Mr. Greene. You would love it. All architects rave over it. It is much like the Morris-Jumel house in New York."

"That's a charming house!" exclaimed Gilbert.

"Our old gardens are still in existence, Mr. Greene, and they really are wonderful. You should see our Rosary! Unfortunately, I have had to rent my old home, so I can't invite you to see it, as I should love to do."

"The invitation is something anyhow," said Gilbert. "Thank you."

"The lease expires next November," continued Mildred; "but Mr. Carpenter, my lawyer, thinks the tenants will want to renew it. I leave everything to him. I wish I could show you the portrait of my great-great-grandfather, Major John Ashton, in his buff and blue uniform. It is painted by Gilbert Stuart. His wife's portrait was also painted by Stuart. There is a family tradition that she had some very romantic love-affair; but nobody knows just what it was. Then she married her cousin, Major John Ashton; and they were very happy. People say I look like her. I wonder if you'd think so!"

"I should like to see her portrait very much," Gilbert replied. "Was she—was she—as pretty as you are?"

"Oh, Mr. Greene," protested Mildred, with a merry laugh. "There's nothing subtle about you."

As Gilbert handed Mildred out of the car, he said: "You say you have no engagement this evening. May I call and bring a friend of mine—Percy Maude-Edgerley? He is an *attaché* of the British Legation. I think you would like to know him; and I am sure he will be delighted to meet you. I am dining with him to-night."

"I'll be charmed," responded Mildred; "and I'll be so pleased to introduce you to the two Miss Swanns. You'll fall in love with both of them. *I* have. I want you to know them."

"Then it's *au revoir*," said Gilbert, holding out his hand, from which he had quickly drawn the glove.

"Yes, *au revoir*," replied Mildred, who did not seem to object to the fact that he kept her hand in his a little longer than was conventional.

The two Miss Swanns were delighted when Mildred told them of the callers who were coming that evening; and Miss Hatty imme-

diately ordered Cora to set a small table for the cake and sherry she purposed handing to the guests.

Mildred saw at a glance how charmed Miss Hatty and Miss Jessie were with Gilbert Greene and how they met with his approval also. Miss Jessie was very much pleased with the diplomat, who took a seat near Mildred and waited for her to open the conversation.

"What a contrast to Bernard Fogg!" thought Mildred, as she contemplated the tall, athletic figure of Mr. Maude-Edgerley, who was sitting in an easy and indifferent pose. What a typical Englishman he was, with his light hair, sandy moustache, clear, round, blue eyes, and pink and white complexion. How differently, too, Mr. Maude-Edgerley talked from Bernard Fogg. Mr. Maude-Edgerley spoke from his throat in cool, well-measured and musical tones—not on the edge of his lips, as Mildred noted with satisfaction. The slight cadence that Mildred found so charming was not an affectation: it told the story that the Londoner had not been long in this country. The range of his vocabulary was wide and his piquant adjectives—a man is known by the adjectives he keeps—were

chosen with that taste which is the prerogative of the person of culture.

Observant and alert, a polite listener and quick of repartee, Mr. Maude-Edgerley soon, and without trying to do so, made his presence agreeably felt. Although he was not what one would describe as a brilliant conversationalist, when he made a remark it came from a storehouse of knowledge and information, so whatever he said was worthy of attention. An Oxford graduate, a traveller, a scholar and a gentleman of breeding, Mr. Maude-Edgerley was a splendid example of the kind of men Great Britain sends to represent her in foreign countries.

"What a pity," thought Mildred, "that Bernard Fogg is the idea most people have of an Englishman! Now I begin to understand why it is that Englishmen systematically avoid each other when they have nothing in common."

Mr. Maude-Edgerley was surprised to learn that Mildred did not know London, although she had been on the Continent several times.

"Oh, you must come to London," he said, "and when you do, you must let me show you

London. You must see London," he added, " 'the most wonderful and awful of cities,' as Steevens puts it."

"I suppose you know every inch of it," said Mildred.

"No, Miss Ashton," the Londoner replied. "Nobody knows London. You might spend your whole life studying it and you would never know it. It is unthinkably vast. Of course, in one sense," he added, "I know London very well—parts of it—the West End, Westminster and the City. I know the City *very* well. I should like to take you about in the City to see some of the fine old churches and the Guildhall. You know the Guildhall, don't you, Greene?"

"Oh, yes," said Greene, delighted to be drawn into the conversation. "Fine old building with a glorious timber roof. I remember the pigeons—almost as many as at St. Mark's in Venice—and how they come fluttering down out of the cool, blue shadows! I remember Gog and Magog, too."

"What are they?" asked Mildred.

"Two enormous, wooden giants," explained Mr. Maude-Edgerley. "They used to be carried in the procession on Lord Mayor's Day;

and, according to the prophecy of Mother Shipton, 'when they fall, London will fall.' I go to the Guildhall very often," added Mr. Maude-Edgerley. "I am writing a book on old London tavern signs. There is quite a collection of them in the Guildhall; and there is also a valuable library relating to the history of London. I do a great deal of research there. The study of Old London is one of my diversions."

"What are the others?" asked Mildred.

"Cricket," replied Mr. Maude-Edgerley, "and golf."

Gilbert rose to go. "Now you really must come to London, Miss Ashton," Mr. Maude-Edgerley said, as he also rose, "and when you do, I shall be deeply wounded if you do not drop me a line and let me show London to you. We must have tea at Hurlingham, too. That's a definite engagement, I hope."

Miss Hatty, Miss Jessie and Mildred talked for some time about their guests with the accompaniment of an additional glass of sherry and the remains of the cake. When the two Miss Swanns bade Mildred good-night and went to their respective rooms, each was soon dreaming out a pretty romance for Mildred.

Miss Hatty put Mildred and Gilbert Greene through a series of complicated adventures; and, according to the annoying method of dreams, as each adventure was about to end happily, a new catastrophe arose. Finally, the distracted and sympathetic Miss Hatty awoke in tears.

Miss Jessie, on the other hand, saw pictures of an ancient English half-timbered house with many peaked gables and lovely gardens and lawns sweeping to the Thames and also of a London house. In both of these Mildred was presiding. Miss Jessie had just ended a delightful week in the country house and was half-way through a ceremonious dinner in Park Lane, when the butler with the powdered hair and splendid livery suddenly turned into the more familiar person of Cora, who was entering the room with Miss Jessie's early morning cup of coffee.

CHAPTER XIX

AN OLD WORK-BOX

IT was not until two months after her return to New York that Mildred was able to arrange a brief visit to *Wild Acres* to look over her family papers and select the articles she wished to send to the Museum in Washington.

In reply to her letter asking if it would be possible for her to come to *Wild Acres* for a few days, Mr. Carpenter informed Mildred that her request had come at an opportune time. The tenants were away and Mrs. O'Toole was taking care of the house. Mildred could, therefore, come any day she pleased. Mr. Carpenter had already spoken to Mrs. O'Toole, who would prepare for her arrival.

Mildred telephoned Mr. Carpenter that she would run down on the following day.

Mildred found it harder than she expected to be back at *Wild Acres*, under the changed conditions. She decided to finish her errand

speedily and return to New York. It was too painful to remain in this loved spot. Consequently, on the morning following her arrival, she went into the attic soon after breakfast.

Unlocking the door, which had not been opened since she left, more than a year and a half ago, Mildred entered.

"Oh! how hot it is!" she exclaimed, as a scorching breath of air rushed at her, heavy with that peculiar odor that one finds in an old attic and nowhere else.

The attic at *Wild Acres*, like all other old attics, contained the possessions of the present owners and the relics of past generations heaped together in an impartial manner. Here were old pieces of furniture—some out of repair—; old brass handles and key-plates; old curtain rods and rings; broken picture frames; odd pieces of china and cut glass; bags of linen and cotton of all sizes, tied tightly, and containing odds and ends of all kinds; great bundles, firmly pinned and displaying neatly written labels of their contents; and innumerable chests, boxes and trunks of all ages, sizes and varieties.

Mildred's first care was to open the circular window in the gable, to let in some light and

air. As she did this, the bumping and banging and whizzing of a large wasp against the pane proved that her action was appreciated by an unwilling prisoner, who, spreading his wings, balanced himself delicately for half a second on the sill and darted out joyfully into the welcome sunshine.

The sunlight now streamed in and fell upon the group of chests and trunks that Mildred wanted to open.

"I think the costumes are in *that*," she said, looking at a big oak chest decorated with black egg-shaped lozenges and spindles.

Taking a bunch of keys from the small basket she held on her arm, she soon found the proper key. The lock turned.

Yes; she was right. This was the chest for costumes. Now she found the old blue and buff uniform in which Major Ashton's portrait, hanging in the library, downstairs was painted by Gilbert Stuart.

"*This* is going to Washington," she said, laying it aside to be packed.

"I believe I will go through that one, too," she said, looking at a big, red leather trunk studded with brass nails in a quaint pattern. "That trunk belonged to Dolly Ashton, my

great-great-grandmother. I wonder which key will fit it? It must be a rather small one," she added, looking at the lock.

Kneeling before this trunk, Mildred tried key after key; but not one would do. "This is exasperating!" she exclaimed, after trying nearly every key on every bunch. "Now I am determined to get into this trunk."

She tried a little one that she had overlooked. "There! At last!" she cried, as the key slipped easily into the lock, which gave an accommodating little click. "There! I haven't seen inside of this trunk for years!"

Mildred was glad to renew her acquaintance with the contents. Here was a pink and white striped silk dress with little sprigs of flowers scattered over it; here was a white quilted satin petticoat, yellowed by time; here was a light blue and silver brocade; here was a muslin gown sprigged with silver; here was a pair of pale blue satin slippers with glittering paste buckles and enormously high heels; here was a faded straw hat, wide of brim and trimmed with yellow gauze ribbon and some tiny silk flowers; here was a dress of lilac lute-string silk embroidered with little silver feath-

ers; here were several rolls of rich lace; and here were three beautiful fans.

When all these things lay in a heap on the floor, Mildred picked up the pink and white silk as she rose to her feet and held it before her. "She must have been just my size. I could wear this dress. She had pretty clothes and dainty things. Why, I believe she was painted in this very pink and white silk."

As Mildred knelt down again before the trunk and was about to repack the things, she noticed that what she thought was the bottom was a secret tray. She soon discovered how to lift this up and out; and, to her surprise, here she found, wrapped in an old green silk cloak, a large rosewood box, with the tiny key in the lock.

"I must examine this," she said, "but it is too hot here. I will take it downstairs."

Tumbling all the things back into the trunk, Mildred shut the lid, turned the key and went downstairs. "I'll take this out on the verandah," she said.

Seating herself in one of the low wicker chairs, Mildred placed the heavy rosewood box on her lap. Then she paused for a mo-

ment to admire the grain of the wood; the mother-of-pearl inlay that ran around the edge, forming a love-knot at each corner; and the large, square slab of mother-of-pearl that ornamented the centre of the top and softly breathed forth tender hues of rose and green beneath its milky lustre. She turned the tiny key and raised the lid.

"Lovely!" she exclaimed, as her glance fell upon the delicate light blue silk crape with which it was lined.

The box was one of those artistic productions of the late Eighteenth Century, which, owing to careful planning and deft workmanship, are marvels of compactness, convenience and beauty. A little lid, covered with blue crape and bearing in its centre a tiny crown-shaped knob of silver filagree, enclosed each of the four compartments that surrounded a large one in the centre. On raising the first with a gentle, reverent touch, Mildred found beneath it a dozen miniature spools of colored embroidery silks; in the second, a little olive-wood box with a painting in sepia of Nice in 1770 on the lid; in the third, some wheel-shaped, ivory winders with the silk still bright upon them; and in the fourth, an agate-

handled seal bearing the Ashton coat-of-arms and several delicately drawn patterns for embroidery work. In the large central compartment lay a silver-topped glass *vinaigrette*, exquisitely cut with rows of deep set stars, which flashed in the sunlight as Mildred held it up to examine its beauty. Here was something else. A silver thimble with a lace-like rim of filagree. It bore the initials of the owner, D. A., and the date 1774. Mildred tried it on. It fitted perfectly.

"It must have been hard to sew with this," thought Mildred, as she critically observed her newly adorned finger. "I should think the filagree would catch the thread; but perhaps our ancestors sewed more slowly than we do to-day."

Placing it back carefully in the little silk-lined hole opposite a plump scarlet velvet strawberry emery cushion with green leaves, the new owner of the box let down the crape lining of the top, puckered into a curious formal rosette pattern of a by-gone age and held in place by a small, movable silver pin. Here she discovered a number of invitations to distinguished houses in Paris and London dated 1770, an illustrated programme of an

evening's entertainment at Ranelagh; a card to a fashionable rout in London; a few clippings from the *New York Gazette* relating to entertainments at the Governor's House and Hull's Assembly Rooms in Broadway; and a crisp and faded ivy-leaf, evidently very precious as it was folded in a sheet of pink watered letter paper with gilt edges.

This box had not been opened for over a hundred years: the pretty blue crape was not faded in the least; the silver was not tarnished; and everything was in beautiful order, just as Dolly Ashton had left it.

As Mildred was wondering by what process Time gives so strange and subtle a perfume—"a sense-beguiling odor," she called it—to all delicate objects, there seemed to be added to this indescribable essence that excites some as yet imperfectly understood connections with the brain that seem to start currents of thought and vague imaginings—an imperceptible sense of the scent, rather than the scent itself, of attar of rose; and Mildred almost felt the presence of the Eighteenth Century lady who had so long been a Dweller among Shadows.

"Enough!" said Mildred to herself, as she

fancied that a cool wave of air touched her forehead and then the hand that was placing these treasures back and fastening the pin at the top. "Let us lift the tray," for she had discovered the little silken loops at each side. Yes; the tray lifted, and below it—what?

A ray of sunlight that had been playing with Mildred's hair now leaped into the box far more rapidly than Mildred's gaze to dance and revel there with the semi-precious stones of a necklace that had so long been hidden in darkness. How it welcomed the long banished light! The stones palpitated and flashed in bewildering harmonies of purple, yellow, red, green and blue, as if with joy in response to the warm kiss of the golden sunbeam that woke them into life again.

Recovering from the first blinding flash, Mildred lifted the necklace to examine it more carefully. It was hard to decide which was the lovelier,—the harmoniously graduated stones, or their quaint setting in interwoven threads of silver.

"A *jardinière*—a flower garden of jewels, set in the lovely Italian manner," exclaimed Mildred, as she clasped it on her neck. "I

have seen just such necklaces on the long necks of Luini's and Botticelli's women! Oh, how beautiful!"

But this was not all. The necklace had lain beside two packages of yellowed letters, each tied with a faded blue ribbon, and a Diary, bound in green leather and fastened with a silver clasp.

Mildred paused.

Should she read these, or burn them? Although greatly tempted, not only by a natural curiosity but by her love of romance, she hesitated; for it seemed to her that to open them would be to intrude upon the privacy of one powerless to defend herself from the profane eye of an intruder. Long she sat there immovable, wondering, pondering, thinking what she should do. Finally, believing that perhaps these records of a past life, connected to hers by ties of blood, might have some message for her, as they had come to her so strangely and after so many years, she decided to untie the packages and unclasp the little book.

Again the faint odor of roses made her half close her eyes for a moment and the same cool breeze came again, first gently shaking the

sprays of honeysuckle above her head and then ruffling her hair and fanning her cheek.

"I wonder," exclaimed Mildred with a slight shiver, "if she *could* be here beside me! If such a thing is possible! Spiritualists would say 'Of course, she is here!' I do not know: it is very strange. One spray of that honeysuckle is waving and every other cluster is still! Life is so strange! Perhaps the dead are more alive than we, who *think* we live! Who can say, or not, if some emanation has not been mysteriously evoked? Perhaps it is imagination; but I *feel* her here beside me; and with all reverence and sympathy I am going to open her Diary."

Mildred paused again, thinking how strangely she had been invited to open a chapter into the Past. Then, for a few moments the Present claimed her: the morning was so perfect. As she looked beyond the verandah through the frame of roses and honeysuckle, both in luxuriant bloom, she was again impressed with the loveliness of her ancestral home. The sun threaded its bewildered way through the thick grove of maples to lay patches—large and small—of luminous yellow upon the green lawn; beneath the

branches of the trees the Sound, lying deep below the bluff and gay with pleasure-boats of many kinds, gleamed with waves of silver and blue; at intervals a light wind—forerunner of a storm—caught and gently swayed the sleepy boughs of the maples, beeches and cedars and turned the excited leaves of the tall poplars backward into a quivering mass of delicate, silvery gray; many birds were flying hither and thither busy making, or returning to, their nests; and fat, yellow-banded bees often visited the clusters of honeysuckle above her head from which, at their clumsy departure, these guests shook down showers of dew-drops hidden too deep in the white and buff horns of honey for the sun to find.

The voices of June were all around her. She heard the drowsy hum of these soft-footed honey-gatherers; the frequent and so sweet call of the loving robins to "Hurry up, hurry up, hurry up, *dearie!*" the peevish "*mee-u*" of the cat birds from the neatly trimmed bushes; the occasional raucous "caw-caw" of a far-away crow; the shrill "Bob, Bob *White*" of the quails from various quarters; the *puff, puff, puff* of a distant motor boat, dancing up and down upon the shining

Sound; and the hoot of an automobile quickly passing beyond the hedges and the entrance gate to *Wild Acres*.

Unclasping the Diary, Mildred sat for many hours on the verandah reading from the faded pages and was startled to discover incidents in her great-great-grandmother's romance that strangely resembled her own.

Are our lives but reproductions of those that have gone before us? Do we, who have inherited certain qualities from our ancestors, attract to ourselves circumstances that will bring into action these inherited qualities dormant in us?

How strange is heredity! How strange are the workings of Life!

CHAPTER XX

A REVOLUTIONARY DIARY

OPENING the Diary at random, the first entry Mildred's eyes fell upon was:

March 4, 1777. Everybody's gone out, even Prissy! I feel so lonely and depressed. Heigh-ho! I wish somebody would come and run away with me; and I wouldn't care if that somebody's name began with the initials J. A.

Is this love? Yes; I think it is! And who wouldn't love such a handsome, gallant fellow? Certainly not Dolly!

"Life, what art thou without love?"

Then Mildred turned to the first page.

April 23, 1775. *Sunday*. I am beginning a Diary to-day because of the great excitement in town. News has just come from Boston that hostilities have begun between the King's troops and the Provincials.

Uncle John considers it very serious. I have therefore resolved to chronicle the happenings. Went to Trinity, as usual, and walked in the Mall after church. Everybody stopped to discuss the alarming news from Boston.

'April 29. *Saturday.* \ What an *awful* week! Nothing but confusion and commotion all over the town. All business stopped. Nothing but the sound of fifes and drums and clattering of horsemen. Soldiers enlisting on all sides. All the mothers, wives and sweethearts of the town in tears. Many people so panic-stricken that they are getting ready to flee into the country. Many families at odds, some members siding with the King and some for Independence. We are having great excitement in our house; for we, too, are divided. Uncle John is for the King, as is natural, I suppose, for one of His Majesty's Council for the Province; but Aunt Betty and I are for Independence of the Colonies. This is natural, too, I dare say, for all the Ashtons are in the Continental Army. We grow very hot sometimes, especially when my cousin, John Ashton, calls.

May 26. The *Asia*, a man-of-war, Captain Van Deput, arrived from Boston.

June 25. General William Tryon arrived from England. He landed late in the evening. There was a great commotion, but not so much as for the welcome to General George Washington, who came from Philadelphia early in the afternoon. He has just been made commander-in-chief of all the troops. General Washington was attended by General Schuyler and General Lee and escorted by the Philadelphia Light Horse, Captain Markoe. He was received by the military and citizens. General W. is very distinguished of bearing and manner. Admired him very much.

June 26. Gen. W. left for N. England to-day.

July 3. Read General Washington's reply to the address of the Provincial Congress of the Colony of New York in this morning's *Gazette*. Indeed but it is fine! I must copy it:

"As to the fatal but necessary operations of war when we assumed the soldier we did not lay aside the citizen; and we shall most sincerely rejoice with you in that happy

hour when the establishment of American Liberty on the most firm and solid foundations shall enable us to return to our private stations in the Bosom of a free, peaceful and happy Country."

July 17. Read the declaration in the *Gazette* this morning by the representatives of the United Colonies of North America now in Congress in Philadelphia, setting forth the causes and necessity of their taking arms.

Much impressed with the righteousness of our cause.

July 20. On Monday last saw Col. Lasher's Battalion of City Militia reviewed by Brigadier-Generals Montgomery and Wooster. Many ladies and gentlemen were present. They went through the exercises with the greatest order, alertness and decorum. The country can never be enslaved while we have such men to defend us. John Ashton is in this Battalion. He did well. Aunt Betty was very proud of him. So was I. John came to supper afterwards. He told us some new toasts that he heard at Frances Tavern in the afternoon. Here they are:

"May the enemies of Heaven be turned into salt petre and go off in hot blasts.

"May America ever be the dread and scourge of tyrants.

"The Daughters of America in the arms of their defenders only.

"Duel and jack-boots before dishonor and wooden shoes."

Uncle John laughed heartily and then said:

'Damme, Jack, but you forget this is a Tory house! Let's drink to the King and his worst enemies—your Aunt Betty, Dolly and Jacky Ashton!'

Uncle John is very good, I think, to let us talk so freely as he does, he being so ardent a Tory; but Uncle John is Uncle John with the best of good tempers, and besides he loves Aunt Betty (dear thing!) so dearly (who doesn't, I'd like to know?) that he would submit to anything and everything for her sake. All Aunt Betty's family—including me—Dolly—are strong for Independence. Indeed, we become more ardent and eager for it each day, each hour.

"The daughters of America in the arms of their defenders only," say I.

Sept. 18. The Minute Men paraded to-day. Saw the parade from our house. Drank a dish of tea afterwards at Cousin Hannah's. Nothing talked of but the war. Cousin Hannah is going to Philadelphia to-morrow to visit the Shippens.

Nov. 26. Sunday morning went to the New Dutch Church with John Ashton to hear Dr. Archibald Ladlie. He has just been made chaplain to the First Battalion of Independent Minute Men. His text was "Stand fast in the Liberty with which Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Gal. v. 1. A splendid sermon. Walked with John in the Mall after church. Everybody we met very solemn. Long faces everywhere.

Dec. 2. Bought some books at Valentine Nutter's. Also *The Mourning Bride*, *Beaux Stratagem* and *Recruiting Officer*. I love to read plays.

Mildred now skimmed through a number of pages chiefly devoted to historical events. She began to read attentively again in the summer of 1776.

July 8. Fleet from Halifax arrived. It is off Staten Island.

July 10. The Congress Declaration of Independence of the United States of America was read at the head of each brigade of the Continental Army posted near and in the City. The statue of King George in Bowling Green was thrown down and broken in pieces. They say the lead is to be used for bullets. As the statue is almost opposite our house, we had full benefit of the performance. I am sure I am glad enough that it has gone. It always looked so ghostly on moonlight nights and still worse in the dark. When I was a little girl I was afraid at night it might come in my window; and I have never quite got over my feeling about that man on the horse.

July 12. Lord Howe has arrived in the *Eagle* from England with a large fleet. Uncle John, Aunt Betty and I watched the ships from the gallery on top of our house. It was a wonderful sight. They turned towards the Jersey shore when they reached Bedlow's Island and went up the river. The British lion is roused!

Sept. 21. Oh what a dreadful thing I have

to record now! How can I write it down? It was so awful, that terrible, terrible fire of last night! It broke out near Whitehall between twelve and one o'clock in the morning. We were all in bed. Aunt Betty called me. I dressed and went up to the gallery, where Aunt Betty and Uncle John were already watching the fire. It was an awful, awful sight. There was a high wind blowing, which made everything worse. Soon flames began to burst out in other places until the whole city seemed to be burning up. It grew worse and worse. I shall never forget the strange light, the roaring of the flames, the unnatural, hot air, the crashing of the houses as their walls fell in, the clouds of smoke and all the excitement of the people running about the streets fighting the flames and trying to save the poor people. Major-General Pattison sent for two regiments and placed guards in the streets. Lord Howe ordered the boats of the fleet manned. All the buildings between Broad Street and the North River were burned and many near King's College. Oh, how we grieved to see dear old Trinity burn to the ground! How

awful it was to watch it! It was a pyramid of fire! Several women and children perished in the fire. We heard their shrieks in the midst of the flames. I can never forget the horror of it all! Those bright flames in the darkness of night! The fire raged ten hours! It is just out; but even now it is smouldering in places, which are being watched. Many hundreds of families are destitute. Uncle John, Aunt Betty, Prissy and I have worked hard all day to relieve sufferers. We have one poor family that we are taking care of in our house. How sad to look around and see the blackened ruins! And oh, the smell of it all! The horrid, horrid, charred smell! Truly we are living in terrible times!

Oct. 7. Uncle John has everything to please him now! Our town is entirely British! His Majesty's Forces are in possession of New York, with all the harbor and Sound, of Long and Staten Islands and nearly all of New York Island. They are also in possession of Powles Hook and command the East River and Connecticut Sound. So vast a Fleet has never been seen together in this part, or, perhaps, in all America be-

fore. The Ships are stationed up the East River, or Sound, as far as Turtle Bay. Near the Town the multitude of masts carries the appearance of a wood. Some are moored in the North River; others in the Bay between Red and Yellow Hook; some off Staten Island; and several off Powles Hook and towards the Kills. The Men-of-War are moored chiefly up New York Sound and make, with the other ships, a very magnificent and formidable appearance.

Jan. 3, 1777. Bought a new squirrel muff and tippet at Lyon Jonas's in Broad Street. Muffs are large this year. Mine seems immense. The tippet is small, but *very* modish.

Jan. 4. Everybody is studying French with M. Tenière, lately arrived from Paris. I am going to begin next week. Read the Earl of Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son*, just imported.

Jan. 25. Uncle John, Aunt Betty, Cousin Hannah, Cousin Tom, Mr. Ludlow and I went to the opening of the little theatre in John Street, now the Royal Theatre. The play was *Tom Thumb*, the celebrated bur-

lesque written by the late Mr. Fielding to ridicule the bathos of several dramatic pieces that at his time had engrossed the London theatres.

We sent Prissy and Cousin Hannah's Judy early, to keep our seats for us. The house was crowded. The characters were performed by the Gentlemen of the Army and Navy. The performers showed much spirit and taste.

The prologue was written and spoken by Captain Stanley. Dr. Beaumont, the surgeon-general, was monstrous amusing. So was Lieut. Pennefeather. He took the part of Huncamunca. Lieut. P. always plays a woman's part. They say he is fine in the *Beaux Stratagem*, which the officers are soon going to give. How I should like to see him play Lady Teazle, or Mrs. Malaprop! He is too funny for anything. Aunt Betty and I nearly split our sides laughing, for we know him so well; but we had never seen him act before.

Major Williams of the Artillery; Captain Oliver De Lancey of the 17th Dragoons; Captain Michael Seix of the 22nd Foot; Captain William Loftus of the

Guards; Captain Edward Bradden of the 15th Foot; Captain Phipps, William Hewlet and Major John André were the others who took part. Captain De Lancey painted the scenes, except the drop curtain. This was done by Major André. It represented a beautiful prospect—a meadow with a winding stream extending a long way into the distance. In the centre is a cascade, the water falling most natural. It is overshadowed by majestic trees. The whole is wonderfully toned and glazed. Everybody was in raptures over it.

Jan. 26. Met Lieut. Pennefeather walking in Hanover Square this morning as I was going to Henry Wilmot's to get some double-edged blonde lace for Aunt Betty. I held out my hand and greeted him with 'O Huncamunca! Huncamunca O!' quoting this line with an expression of great admiration.

Lieut. P. shook my hand warmly and said it was the nicest congratulation he had had. I told him how much we had enjoyed his acting. He smiled gratefully, but insisted that the honors should go to Dr. Beaumont and Major André.

Lieut. P. then asked if he might bring Captain Stanley and Major André to call that evening. I said yes; but come to supper. Knew it would please Uncle John. It did. A most delectable evening! We played Quadrille until long after midnight. Aunt Betty and Major André were partners and Lieut. Pennefeather and I. Lieut. P. and I won. We consulted together in a corner away from the others later and decided to buy a new snuff-box for Uncle John with our winnings, as a surprise. I saw some yesterday at Rivington's, just imported, of paper, beautifully painted and gilt.

Feb. 20. I think I am getting to be quite "the taste." I had more attention last night at the Assembly than Patty Deane, who has been the toast of the town for two years. Patty was monstrously vexed. I danced three minuets with J. A. and several country dances. He dances to perfection. The officers were fluttering around me like butterflies. "Splitt me!" if they weren't! I got that fine expression from Lieut. Pennefeather. He is always saying it, and in such a monstrous funny way.

I felt all the evening quite as a flower must feel when it holds out every petal and all its leaves to the butterflies. My butterflies were red-coated and gold-laced, very gallant and smart. There were others besides officers at my feet. Ahem! There were two Maccaronis just from London, who were my devoted slaves. There were two gentlemen from Philadelphia and three from Boston who basked in the sunlight, the moonlight, or the candle light of my charms. I flirted terribly with all of them, Uncle John encouraging me. But there was one devoted admirer that I liked best of all. He shall be nameless. O Diary, even you shall be kept in the dark!

Yes; I was the *ton* last night. "Strike me dumb" but I was! Another of Lieut. Pennefeather's favorite exclamations. Aunt Betty was proud of me. So was Uncle John. I think Uncle John wants a wedding in his house. Who the bride, I wonder?

Guion, the new *coiffeur*, just arrived from London, dressed my hair in the very latest mode. It was the first time I ever wore a *tête*. It took Guion two hours to

build it. I can describe it because I am looking at it now in the glass.

To begin with, it is at least three feet above my forehead, the hair brushed up perfectly straight. Then come some soft and rounded puffs and a profusion of little curls, some tightly pinned to the head, and some loosely dangling; and when I give my head a shake—a playfully, petulant shake—they move in the most bewitching manner. At least, that is what Captain Stanley told me last night.

This style of head is new to me, so I was glad to know that I carried it with ease. But, to go on. My head is built up into a kind of architectural mass. It is a veritable construction worthy of Inigo Jones, Batty Langley, or Sir Christopher Wren. Well, any number of wrens could build among my curls and puffs and I'd be none the wiser. And if we have bees in our bonnets, why not wrens in our curls? Answer me, O Diary!

I think Guion must have used several bushels of horsehair and wool, eight or ten pots of pomade and several bags of scented powder. While he was composing this

monument, every now and again he would walk away to a distance and survey me; first on one side, then directly in front, then from the back and then on the other side, squinting his eyes and looking at me through his lorgnette. When it was all built up and perfectly satisfactory, he powdered it with a sweet-scented powder of a pale pinkish hue. He tried the effect of several powders against my skin, and said this was the most becoming to my complexion. Then, when the powdering was finished, he wound in and out among my curls yards and yards and yards of the loveliest pale blue gauze ribbon with a silver thread running through it! I think he used fifteen yards. (I mean to measure it when my head is taken to pieces next week) and he made the most *modish* loops and knots and bows that I ever saw. Guion has the most skilful fingers!

But this is not all, O Diary! I have every kind of fruit on my *tête*, I think, that ever grew in the Garden of Eden, or in Mr. William Prince's nurseries at Flushing. For example, I have a big bunch of red morello cherries on the right, by the side

of three large curls; I have peaches, plums, apricots, pears and crab-apples (*beauties*) at the puffs on top where there is the greatest height; and I have strawberries, currants, gooseberries and grapes at the back. On the left side a cascade of ribbon falls nearly to my shoulders.

My dress—but why speak of my dress after my head? My dress was blue and silver brocade trimmed with a profusion of blonde lace. My slippers were blue satin with very high heels and glittering paste buckles.

“I have just had these in my hand,” Mildred exclaimed; and then read on:

Captain De Lancey said I was the most perfect female Maccaroni he had seen in New York as yet.

Guion also dressed Aunt Betty's head. She wore fourteen tall puce-colored ostrich feathers arranged “*à la Reine*,” or the style that Marie Antoinette most approves, some turned down towards the face and some turned up; and below them a band of puce-colored ribbon tied in a bow. Aunt Betty

carried her headdress like a queen herself. Guion darkened her eyebrows very much, which made her very handsome. She wore a great number of *mouches*, which Guion cut in the latest style—chiefly little stars and crescents. They were most becoming. Aunt Betty carried the new patch-box I gave her at Christmas. I got it at Oliver Bruff's in Maiden Lane. I didn't tell Aunt Betty what I paid for it. I did Uncle John though; and he said it was all right. Aunt Betty would not approve of my spending two guineas for her when there is so much suffering among our American people and food is so dear and getting dearer every day.

Uncle John thinks differently. He paid Guion two hundred pounds for dressing Aunt Betty's and my heads! We keep the fruits and feathers and ribbons, so we shall have something to show for it when our heads are taken apart.

Oh, I haven't finished with the Assembly! Oh, Diary, Diary! where am I running to? Why didn't you refuse to let my quill fly along like the goose on which it grew? *Je reviens à mes moutons.* Ah! I

am coming to the most important thing of all,—my *fan*!

I carried a Watteau fan. J. A. wrote a verse on it when I wasn't looking. It was wrote on the plain side behind the picture of Venus in her chariot drawn by doves with Cupid by her side. He took the fan away and did not return it till after supper; and then he handed it to me folded. I did not discover the poem until this morning when Prissy called my attention to it. She found it when she was putting away my things. This is the verse:

“The Paphian goddess, in her chase,
Found naught so fair as Dolly's face;
In all her journeys through the skies
Found naught so fair as Dolly's eyes;
Venus her torch doth yield, and doves,
To Dolly, now the Queen of Loves!”

What do you think of that, little Diary, for gallantry?

Mildred read on and on. She soon noticed that the *Diary*, which had begun to chronicle the thrilling history of Revolutionary days, became by degrees a personal record of the young girl, who was both a belle

and a patriot, now mingling in the gaieties of New York and now busy making clothes for the American soldiers and helping her charitable Aunt Betty alleviate the miseries of the afflicted, impoverished and distressed. Soon through the records of her daily life of pleasures and duties the golden thread of love began to intertwine. References to J. A. became increasingly frequent. He took walks with her; he danced with her; he played cards with her; he rode with her; he wrote verses to her; he made little pen-and-ink sketches for her; and, above all, he frequently sang to her accompaniments on the harpsichord. What particularly struck Mildred was the fact that J. A. and Dolly found so much delight in the enjoyment of music together. When he was absent from town, Dolly was inconsolable and poured out the longings for the beloved one that absence creates upon the pages of the little book that evidently became to Dolly a sympathetic friend who received confidences that she could not voice even to her dearly-loved Aunt Betty. Whenever J. A. returned to New York, the Diary bubbled over with Dolly's outbursts of joy.

The romance culminated in the winter of 1780. There was reference to a letter in which J. A. offered Dolly his hand and heart. On the same page was a record of Dolly's answer, which cost her so much to give. The Diary bore witness to Dolly's struggle, distress of mind and sacrifice.

The last entry was:

Jan. 19, 1780. Yesterday was the Queen's Birthday. The Royal salute began at noon, fired from Fort George and repeated by the ships-of-war at two o'clock. Uncle John went to the grand dinner given by General Tryon to General Knyphausen, General Philips, General Pattison, commandant of the city, Baron Riedesel and others. The Ball given by the officers of the Army was magnificent. It cost two thousand guineas! It was opened by Major-General Pattison and the Baroness Riedesel, a very attractive woman. The country-dances began at nine thirty. At twelve, supper; in the two long rooms. The tables exhibited a most elegant appearance, being ornamented with Parterres and Arbors displaying an elegant assemblage of

natural and artificial flowers, China images, etc. We did not get home till after three in the morning.

J. A. danced the minuet with me just before supper. He asked if my letter was final. Told him yes—that I could not bring myself to marry any one who was fighting against the cause which was so dear to me.

“Ever, ever thine,” he murmured in my ear, as he gave me his arm and we went into the supper rooms. Both much agitated, but had to face the company. Major-General Pattison, who had taken out the Baroness Riedesel, soon catching sight of my escort, said in a loud voice so that everybody could hear him: “I call upon the adjutant-general for a song. We all know what a brave soldier he is; and yet music is, perhaps, not the least of his accomplishments. Ladies and gentlemen, I offer the toast, our worthy adjutant-general, the brave soldier and the accomplished gentleman, Major John André!”

Came home and sat alone for hours in my room—until the sun rose. I am full of sorrow and oppressed with the sense of solitude,

Mildred closed the little book. For a while she was lost in thought. Then she replaced the Diary in the box, shut the lid and turned the key.

"I will take this box to the attic," she said, "and put it back among *her* things. The story is a sacred and personal one; and I will keep it so."

CHAPTER XXI

TWO INVITATIONS

WHEN Mildred returned to Mrs. Carroll's she tried to feel as if she were coming home; but it was no use. Boarding-house life was more depressing than ever. Several days passed before she became adjusted again to the scenes. Moreover, it was very warm and she felt the change from the country.

One morning as she was ascending the stairs just after breakfast and wondering how she could possibly live through another summer in such small quarters, she met Miss Jessie Swann, returning from an early walk to the florist's.

"Oh, Miss Ashton," the latter exclaimed, "how glad I am to see you. I didn't know you had got back yet. My sister and I have been talking about you and we want to see you. We have something we want to talk over with you. Can you spare us a few minutes?"

"With pleasure," Mildred responded, following Miss Jessie into the sitting-room, which looked so cool and refreshing in its summer attire of new white matting, furniture covers of crisp linen and the mirrors and pictures immaculate in their neatly stretched veilings of white net.

"Hatty!" she called. "Here's Miss Ashton."

"Oh, how do you do, Miss Ashton, I am so glad to see you," said Miss Hatty, entering from the inner room. "Do sit down a few minutes. My sister and I have been wanting to see you. We have decided to go to Europe," and Miss Hatty paused a moment, for she had not become quite accustomed to this startling fact; "and we want you to go with us. It is very sudden for us, because we generally make our plans a long way ahead; but we have never been abroad and Jessie is so anxious to go that she has persuaded me. *You* know Europe; and we think it would be so nice if you would go with us. We want you to arrange the whole trip; and, as you know the ropes, we will leave everything to you. Will you think it over?"

"I can answer now," replied Mildred. "I shall be delighted to go."

"Don't feel obliged to answer at once," said Miss Hatty, who was deliberate. "Wouldn't you like to take a night's sleep on it?"

"Oh, how sweet you are!" exclaimed the enthusiastic Miss Jessie, putting her hand gently on Mildred's arm.

"Oh, no, thank you," said Mildred to Miss Hatty. "I always know my own mind quickly. I think it would be delightful. How long do you intend to stay?"

"Why," said Miss Jessie, who was unfolding the white tissue paper that contained the roses she had just purchased, "we think of staying a little over a year. We want to sail as soon as we can get passage—the end of this month, perhaps—and, of course, being there through the winter, we may as well spend the summer and come back a year from next October."

"That gives us two summers and a winter in Europe," added Miss Hatty.

"I think that is a lovely plan," said Mildred. "What are you going to do with

Cora?" she added, as the latter entered with a vase for Miss Jessie.

"Why, Cora goes with us, *of course*," said Miss Hatty.

"Do you want to go, Cora?" asked Mildred.

"Yes'm," answered the grinning Cora, her dark skin having turned a little dull and ashy. "Yes'm, I wants to go; but I'se skeered. Miss Hatty, she skeered, too; but she don't let on, like I does."

"Oh, we couldn't think of leaving Cora," said Miss Jessie. "We couldn't do without Cora. She's one of the family."

"I certainly is," said Cora, who was watching Miss Jessie arrange the flowers. "I certainly is. I couldn't do without you-all, either. If you-all goes to de bott'm, I goes, too."

"What do you want me to do?" Mildred asked Miss Hatty.

"We want you to lay out the whole trip, Miss Ashton," explained Miss Swann.

"Then," said Mildred, "the first thing to do is to telephone right away to the steamship companies and get them to send us lists of sailings."

"Yes. Use our telephone. Call them up now," suggested Miss Hatty, who was beginning to get excited.

"Do you care about any special line?" asked Mildred.

"No," replied Miss Jessie.

"I always used to go with my aunt, Mrs. Van Norden, on the French line," said Mildred. "How would you like to take a French steamer? We could go from Cherbourg directly to Paris—unless you would rather go to England first."

"No," said Miss Jessie. "I want to go right straight to Paris."

"See how frivolous my sister is," laughed Miss Hatty. "Nothing but Paris will suit her!"

"But, Hatty," Miss Jessie objected, "Paris isn't entirely frivolous. The Louvre, for instance, isn't frivolous. I have always wanted to see the Louvre."

"Let's leave England until the very last," suggested Miss Hatty. "I want to go to Switzerland and to Italy. I care more about seeing Italy than any other country. I want to go to Venice and to Florence and to Rome."

"Suppose then," said Mildred, "that we spend the winter in Italy—having Easter in Rome—then the early spring in Paris, get to London in May for the season and give the rest of the summer to England. We could take an English steamer home, from Liverpool, or Southampton."

"That sounds delightful, Miss Ashton," said Miss Hatty.

"Oh, I think it is splendid!" cried Miss Jessie. "Perfectly splendid! I'm so glad we are going!"

"I am, too," said Miss Hatty; "but oh! to think of what we shall have to do to get ready!"

"I reck'n Cora's got to whirl in and be mighty busy, too," ejaculated Cora.

"I reckon she has," said Miss Jessie, emphatically, looking, with a smile, at Cora. "We'll never get to Europe, if you stand still like this all day."

Cora never moved. She merely showed more of her large, white teeth, for she knew perfectly well that Miss Jessie was joking and that she was more than willing that Cora should hear the discussion of all the arrange-

ments for the trip in which she was to have a part.

"All right," said Mildred, rising, "I will lay out two or three tours and telephone to the office of the French company, and I'll run down again later. Shall you be in this afternoon, Miss Swann?"

"Oh, yes," replied Miss Hatty, "think of the letters that we have to write!"

"Come in at five o'clock," said Miss Jessie, "and have a cup of tea with us."

"Let her come before five, Jessie," said Miss Hatty. "Come early, Miss Ashton, and *stay* to tea."

"Then I'll be in about four o'clock," said Mildred, "and we'll talk it all over. I am perfectly delighted to go, and I can't thank you half enough for wanting me."

It was not long before this important piece of news was circulated throughout the boarding-house; but the greatest effect was felt in the kitchen.

Cora, who already occupied the seat of honor at the kitchen table, began to assume an extra air of dignity and importance. Oscar and Saidee, duly impressed with her

forthcoming trip, accorded to her all that she demanded. Cora was looked upon already as a heroine and traveller into mysterious and unknown regions.

When it was agreed that the little party should sail in three weeks, Mildred, too, found that she had much to do. One afternoon, after she had been paying a few calls on the East side, she concluded to walk home.

Wending her way rather slowly along Fifth Avenue, Mildred had just crossed Fifty-seventh Street, when she saw coming towards her a rather slim figure in a tight fitting frock coat, tall collar, bright necktie and top hat. It looked familiar.

"Oh, good heavens!" she said to herself, "I believe that's Bernard Fogg! I hope he hasn't seen me!"

Alas! Mildred, alack and alas for you! He has seen you. In fact, he has been following you all the afternoon, walking on the other side of the street. He has walked a little faster this last block and crossed. Now he is coming to meet you. You can't escape him.

"Good evening," said Fogg, lifting his hat. "I will join you. You are going home, I fancy?"

"Yes," replied Mildred, "I am going home."

There was no help for it.

Apart from the annoyance of his unwished-for presence, Mildred hoped she would meet none of her friends. What would they think!

At any rate, she had to try to accept the situation with as much composure as she could muster, so she tried to make the best of it.

"It is a lovely afternoon," she said, "but it is getting a little warm. Fifth Avenue already begins to look deserted. Everybody will soon be going away."

Mildred unwittingly played into her escort's hand. This gave him his chance.

"I hear you are going to Europe, Miss Ashton," said Bernard Fogg, "with some friends. How would you like to go with me?"

Mildred looked amazed.

"I mean, of course, as Mrs. Bernard Fogg."

Mildred laughed merrily. She could not help it.

Mistaking the meaning of her laugh, Mr. Fogg continued: "I have been thinking

about this for a long time. So you see it is nothing new to me;—in fact, I have quite made up my mind to it.”

Mildred laughed again. It was too ridiculous.

“You see,” he went on, “living is really cheaper for two than for one. I get three pounds—I mean fifteen dollars—a week; and that is plenty for two people. I have many friends in London who would consider three pounds a week quite a bit of money. How much do you make, Miss Ashton?”

“Well, that is rather a private and personal affair,” replied Mildred, in cool tones, haughtily.

“Oh but it isn’t, you know. Not altogether. It’s partly my affair. I am making it my affair. I was thinking that you and I together might count on five pounds a week. Five pounds a week!” he repeated. “That is quite a bit of money! Our music, too—you could accompany me and you have such good connections. You could get me drawing-room engagements that would add quite a little to our income. Besides,” he continued, “I have saved a little and we could use this for a trip home. I should like my fam-

ily to see you, Miss Ashton. We can soon get summer rates; and, of course, we will go second class."

"*What?*" cried Mildred.

"Of course," said Bernard Fogg. "Why, aren't you and the Swanns going second class?"

"Why, no," said Mildred. She was looking at him now with a steady, level gaze.

Mr. Fogg failed to catch the meaning of her glance.

"Why, *I* always travel second-class," he said, "and so do my sisters. I should never want my wife—Mrs. Bernard Fogg—to have anything better than my sisters have had."

"Mr. Fogg," said Mildred, coldly, "you don't understand me at all. If you did, you wouldn't be wasting your time and mine on a matter to which there can be but one answer. I couldn't consider this for a moment."

"Yes, but you will," replied Bernard Fogg, "you will consider it for a good many moments. Women always talk like this. In fact, I expected some such answer."

"I am glad you did," was Mildred's sharp retort, "for then you won't get a shock."

"I like to see you when you talk like this.

It gives you such a pretty color," said Mr. Fogg; "you look quite like an English girl now."

Mildred had reached the end of her patience. What could she do? Here she was only at Forty-second Street! She counted two more blocks on Fifth Avenue, and then Madison Avenue and Park Avenue to cross, and another long block to Lexington Avenue. "I believe I have twenty minutes more of this!" she said. "How can I stand it!"

"You will come to think of this as I do," said Bernard Fogg. "You will come to think of everything as I do in time."

Mildred looked at him. "God forbid!" she thought.

"Moreover," he went on, "you will come to think as I *want* you to think. You will learn to be an English wife in time. I think you have the making of a very good wife, Mildred."

"Address me as Miss Ashton, if you please," said Mildred, her lips quivering and her cheeks burning with indignation.

"You have a splendid color now," said Fogg admiringly. "I like it, you know—really now, very much."

Mildred resolved to walk the rest of the way in silence. Not a word more was spoken as the two passed through the soft blue evening mist that had descended upon the streets and through which the lights from the tall buildings began to glimmer. At last the corner of Lexington Avenue was reached; and never had Mrs. Carroll's door looked so welcome to Mildred.

"Now," said Bernard Fogg, taking his latch-key from his pocket and opening the door, "you will think this over and—"

"I will do nothing of the kind," said Mildred, who had now almost regained her equanimity. "I shall never give it another thought."

Bernard Fogg turned. Was it possible that she meant what she said?

"You don't seem to understand," he exclaimed. "There are a great many girls at home who would be proud to marry me."

"Go and marry them then," said Mildred; "*all* of them!" Then she added: "I will not tell you, Mr. Fogg, what I really think of you, for I do not believe you would care to hear it. Only this; please don't bring up this subject again, Mr. Fogg."

Something in her imperious manner compelled Fogg to stand aside. Mildred darted into the hall and up the stairs, with the determination to find Mrs. Carroll and ask her to change her seat, or Fogg's, at the table. "I'll tell Mrs. Carroll why," she said. "I can't stand a repetition of this. Mrs. Carroll will be furious!"

CHAPTER XXII

A SUNDAY MORNING

THE crisp, flat sheets of the Sunday papers lay unfolded on the large table in the Conway library and no sound broke the stillness of the room except the ticking of the clock, the ringing of the Westminster chimes at every quarter, and the occasional scratching of a match, as Jack Conway started a fresh cigar, or renewed the light of one partially smoked.

Jack had been up since six o'clock.

He had taken an early stroll in Central Park, which was still wearing its June beauty, and had lounged for a while on one of the benches feeding the squirrels and watching their antics and labors. Returning, he had breakfasted lightly—alone, as usual—and had retired to the library, where he was accustomed to spend his Sunday mornings.

As a rule, he read the papers thoroughly and then glanced over the new American,

English and French novels that came regularly every week from a Fifth Avenue bookseller.

It was a duty of François to open the heavy package immediately on its arrival, so that the new volumes might be displayed on the library table without delay and be within reach of everybody. But this morning the master of the house was as indifferent to literature as he was to the newspapers.

Taking a strong cigar from the box that was standing open near the pile of newspapers, Jack lit it thoughtfully and dropped into an easy chair. Hours passed, and still he sat there, contemplating not only the cigar and the smoke, but the past, present and future of Jack Conway, the millionaire broker, whose fortune had not brought him the one thing he desired,—happiness.

These morning hours passed away like the cigars, leaving no trace behind but the ashes of buried hopes.

Was it only yesterday afternoon that he saw Mildred off for Europe?

It seemed an age already! Would Time make this parting easier, or harder?

Jack had known for three months that his

dream was over,—that Mildred never could be his; but he had realized it the more sharply and emphatically yesterday when he heard that deep, sombre note of the steamer as she bade the shore farewell and bore Mildred out into the vasty deep,—like some huge bird, a roc of the Thousand and One Nights, perhaps, carrying off a peerless princess while the bystanders looked on, helpless.

Mildred was gone,—gone for a year! And with her departure the brightness of the sunlight, the tenderness of the moonlight, the perfume of flowers and all the joy and vitality of existence had vanished, too. Nothing was left. Life seemed cold, hard and unbeautiful.

The daily vase of Catherine Mermets was standing on the table. It happened to be near Jack's box of cigars. Jack remembered how often Mildred used to take a rose out of this very vase and put it on. She wore one that memorable night of *Tristan*.

Jack rang for François.

"François, ôtez les fleurs. Elles me font du mal ce matin."

"Oui, M'sieur," replied the butler, as he bore away the roses in wonderment at this unusual order.

Associations were not only painful, but every sound went through Jack like a sharp stab. The hoot of a passing automobile, the occasional ringing of the telephone and the voice of François attending to it, the strains of a Chopin Polonaise coming in from a neighbor's open window, the pat-pat-pat of Pompon's tiny feet as he, in search of company, ran in to make a visit, awakened Jack to the realization of how sensitive the nerves of the ear are when the heart is aching.

Jack did not intend to bear the strain of the present much longer. The setting of his troubled existence was soon to be changed; and even if Sorrow must henceforth be his companion new scenes might prevent him from going mad, as he sometimes felt he must.

It was easy for Jack to order his life in fresh fields in a dignified way. How simple a matter to open a branch of his bank in Shanghai; and what more natural than that the senior partner should be on the spot to organize it?

Jack had arranged every detail, although he had not told Louise of it, as yet. His purpose was to leave New York in two weeks. He thought he would go through the form of

inviting Louise to accompany him. She would refuse, of course, and then would follow naturally a discussion of her future plans. Jack would then announce that he intended to remain in China indefinitely. Louise would understand by that that she would be free to arrange her life as she pleased.

There were to be no guests to luncheon; and Jack had, therefore, decided that he would see Louise immediately after their noon meal and "have it over."

If Jack had spent a more indolent morning than usual, Louise had spent a much busier one. As a rule, she rose on Sundays just in time for luncheon, and tripped downstairs to meet her guests with a fresh complexion, bright eyes and a ravishing costume.

This morning, however, she rose soon after the first rays of the sun, piercing through the window-curtains of daffodil silk, played with the rich silver toilet articles on the dressing-table. She had dressed quickly and without the assistance of Annette.

Louise had much to do.

"I wish," she exclaimed, petulantly, as she seated herself before her desk, "I wish I had not promised Phil that I would sail next week.

It gives me so little time. I am so flurried already that I am nearly beside myself. I've got a great deal to do before I can get off comfortably; and there are always so many things that come up unexpectedly. This is a nuisance—a perfect *nuisance*! There is a lot of business to be attended to, too. When things are well put together and run along easily, Life is perfectly simple; but when you begin to pull things to pieces—oh! what a mess you make! This little establishment is running along smoothly; I have everything just as I want it; Jack lets me alone; I do as I please; I have hosts of nice friends; I have—why should I go anyhow? What am I going to gain by it? I don't know if I am not giving up too much after all!"

Louise's glance travelled rapidly around the room with all its elegancies and luxuries. It was hard to detach herself from this charming *boudoir*, furnished precisely to her liking in the *style Pompadour*, after many conferences with an experienced decorator. Then her mind quickly placed before her in rapid succession pictures of the familiar drawing-rooms, the hall, the reception-room, the library, the dining-room and the model French

kitchen, where such choice dishes were prepared. Everything was certainly not only beautifully appointed, but in perfect running order.

"Yes; Phil De Witt has asked a great deal of me," Louise said aloud. "A very great deal. What has he to offer in return for *my* sacrifice?"

Louise, to her own intense surprise, was beginning to realize that the idea of Philip De Witt's sole companionship spread over an indefinite period of European travel was likely to pall upon her, now that matters were drawing to a focus.

Was Philip De Witt growing a little *fade* already?

"Why should I leave this?" she mused. "I know what I have. 'Better bear'—how is it?—'Better bear the ills we have than fly to those we—we'—I forget how it goes. But never mind! I'm as happy as most of the people I know. I think I will call it off! Why, Pompon!" turning to the little dog as he bounded into the room and jumped into her lap. "Where *have* you been? You naughty, naughty darling, not to have been to see me before this morning! Why didn't you? Oh,

I know. I am up so much earlier than usual. *N'est ce pas*, duckie? Pompon, beeyootiful sing, I think you have just missed a trip to Europe! I'm not quite sure; but I think we are not going, after all!"

Then changing her voice to a more serious tone, Louise said: "I believe I'll call Phil up now and tell him to postpone the sailing for another week. *That* will give me time to think it all over and balance up the whole thing more carefully. I'm not a flighty girl of eighteen and I have a position to consider. It's true people don't think of divorce as they did when I was a child; but, after all, an established position, free from any touch of scandal, counts for something in the world. It is not a question of right or wrong—at least, it doesn't seem so to me—it's a question of *taste!*" Then she laughed, adding: "Perhaps I'm losing my taste for Phil! I'll call him up, any way, and change the date. Jump down, Pompon! Be quiet now; I'm going to telephone."

As Louise held up her finger, the obedient little dog sat down on the folds of her loose gown and watched his mistress as she telephoned, pricking up his ears to listen.

"Phil, I suppose you are amazed to be called up by me at this outrageously early hour; but I want to tell you that I can't possibly get off by next Saturday. I've been up *ages* already, working at my desk; and I see that it will be perfectly impossible for me to manage it. There's *so* much to do. Now run along, like a dear, to-morrow morning the first thing to the White Star office and change the sailing to the next week; and if you can't get passage then, take the week after. Perhaps *that* would be still better anyway."

There was a pause.

Pompon gave two short, sharp barks and then broke out into a series of whines: what was the matter with dear Mistress?

On hearing the reply to her airy command, Louise's face had turned white and hard. Every particle of color had also left her lips. The hand that held the telephone trembled with agitation.

Mr. Phil De Witt had made a mistake. He had given evidence of his high temper and inflexible will a little too soon. Mr. De Witt had no idea of losing Louise now that he had brought her to the point; and he, therefore, received her instructions in a mood that as-

tonished Louise beyond bounds. His blunt phrases also gave her a shock; for Mr. De Witt told Mrs. Conway very peremptorily that she *must* be ready; that everything was arranged; and that he would not consider changing the plans now.

There was, moreover, a new note in his voice, to which Louise was unaccustomed from him, or from any one else,—a note of angry determination.

Louise's quick mind suddenly filled with a suggestion that perhaps Mr. Philip De Witt, as a guest in the Conway house and Mr. Philip De Witt under every day conditions might prove to be two different personages.

Louise was frightened as well as irritated.

There was a pause; and then Pompon heard Louise's voice in a very cold and emphatic tone saying: "You needn't come at all this afternoon. I sha'n't see you if you do. I shall be very tired and I intend to be excused to every one. Good-bye."

Louise stood the telephone on her desk and hung up the receiver. "Well!" she exclaimed, taking a deep breath. "Well! I'm lucky to find this out *now!*"

CHAPTER XXIII

'TWIXT THE CUP AND THE LIP

“COME into the library, Louise,” said Jack, immediately after luncheon. “I’ve something I want to talk to you about.”

“That sounds serious,” replied Louise. “Yes, I’ll come. I was going to write some letters, but they can wait.”

Following her husband into his den, Louise was no sooner seated in the chair that Jack had pulled forward for her near the cool breeze that was slightly waving the curtains of the one large window, than she exclaimed: “Oh, dear! what a smell of stale smoke! Jack, you must have been smoking the whole morning. I can’t possibly listen to you in this stuffy atmosphere. Let’s take a drive. You order the car for five o’clock; and in the meantime, I’ll go and take a rest. I’m dreadfully tired. I’ve been up since day-break. I’ll be ready between five and half-past. I haven’t had any fresh air all day.

I'd like a drive very much. I suppose the matter can wait that long,—can't it?"

"Oh, yes, Louise," answered Jack. "And it won't take very long to discuss. If you want a drive, I'll be very glad to go with you. The air will do us both good."

"All right," replied Louise, as she fluttered away.

"I knew Jack was planning to make a move," Louise said to herself, as she threw her dressing-gown around her and took a restful posture on the sofa in her bedroom. "I wonder what he is going to do? I shall soon know. All this upheaval and uncertainty is extremely trying. However, I will try to forget everything for a while and get a little nap."

Pushing the electric button near the sofa that always summoned Annette, Louise told her maid to call her at half-past four and that she would wear her new taupe *crêpe de chine* and brown hat with the blue plumes.

At half-past five Louise floated down stairs, looking very fresh and charming. Her costume was most becoming; and, as she stopped before the mirror in the hall to tie on her long blue chiffon veil, Jack noticed

the fine lines of her new gown and her stylish slippers that matched the costume.

"Where shall we go?" asked Jack, as the *chauffeur*, with his hand on the wheel, turned his head for the order.

"Oh, I don't care," said Louise. "Let's have a couple of hours."

"Go up Riverside," said Jack to the *chauffeur*.

For a little while neither spoke. The day had been very warm. It was pleasant to sit quietly and enjoy the refreshing air as the motor sped through Central Park. Presently, when they were well along Riverside Drive, Jack broke the silence.

"I am going to open a bank in Shanghai, Louise, and I am going there to run it myself for a time."

"You are?" exclaimed Louise, a little startled by this announcement. "When do you expect to go?"

"In two weeks," replied Jack. "My arrangements are all made."

"Isn't this rather sudden?" asked Louise.

"No," Jack answered. "I've had it under consideration for some time. Everything seems sudden when it happens, you know."

The question that concerns me now," he added after a pause, "is what shall we do with the house. Would you care to keep it, or shall we sell out, or shall we store the furniture and rent the house, or shall we try to rent it furnished? I want your ideas."

"I'm sure I don't know," answered Louise, who at that moment when her tasteful and comfortable home seemed to be drifting away from her, began to cherish a warm feeling for the house and all it contained. Quickly her mind, penetrating into the future, saw Louise Conway without a background. She did not relish the idea of wandering from pillar to post seeking for new sensations and gossiped about whenever she appeared in London, Paris, or New York society. It would require a great deal of energy to re-establish herself. Mrs. Jack Conway had her place in the world. What position would Mrs. Philip De Witt occupy? The fabric that Philip De Witt had erected rested on shifting sands. Its colors were fading, too. Louise was beginning to have misgivings that Mr. De Witt was not possessed of enough personal charm to hold her interest, much less her affection. It was a dangerous experiment.

Was it worth while? The episode of the telephone this morning had brought her to her senses. It was very probable that she might miss Jack's generous treatment. She now had complete independence. Why surrender it?

There had been a long interval of silence while Louise thought all this over and Jack mused quietly, his eyes on the beautiful river.

Again Jack broke the silence.

"Louise," he said, not reading her thoughts, but imagining that she was trying to come to a decision, "it isn't fair for me to expect you to answer such a question in a minute. Think it over. I suppose," he added with a bitter laugh, "you wouldn't care to go to Shanghai with me?"

"I'm not at all sure that I wouldn't," was Louise's astonishing answer. "I think I should like to see China very much."

"Come along then," replied Jack, surprised and bewildered anew as to the rapidly veering mind of woman.

Louise saw in this trip an easy solution of the whole situation. Besides Jack was a most agreeable travelling companion: he made everything so easy and comfortable. Phil De Witt's travelling qualifications were

as yet untried. 'He might be irritable over little things. He looked it. The more Louise considered the question, the more Shanghai smiled upon her.

"Yes, Jack," she said, more emphatically, "I think I'd like to go to China very much. We could leave François in charge of everything; and when we felt like returning the house would be here in readiness—undisturbed—to receive us. You have always made life easy for me and I don't see why we should have a domestic earthquake. It is so unnecessary. We are perfectly adjusted to our life,—why change things?"

"I'm willing," replied Jack. "I think we may as well let matters stand as they are. We are as happy as most people, I suppose. One thing we can say for ourselves,—we do allow each other perfect liberty and independence. That's something!"

"It's a great deal to me," replied Louise. "Jack, there is one thing that you are not,—and that is a tyrant! You're very easy going and considerate. I was thinking of taking a trip myself,—going to Europe. I want new scenes and new people for a time; and I think China is just the thing to interest me."

"Can you be ready in two weeks?" asked Jack. "I can easily make it a week later, if that would suit you better."

"Oh, no," said Louise. "Annette will pack everything; and, as we are not going to break up, there is nothing that can't be ordered, or attended to, speedily."

Again there was an interval of silence. The car now turned into Riverside Drive on its homeward run.

"What a perfect sunset!" exclaimed Jack.

"Where?" responded Louise languidly—"oh, yes—over there. How pretty!"

The glassy waters of the Hudson were now returning to the skies some of the reflected beauty of the amethystine clouds whose delicate golden radiance fast turned into the deeper reds and purples of the afterglow. Soon the darker blues of twilight fell upon the ever-restless waves and the leafy foliage and grassy terraces of the Drive. Here and there a group of slender trees, seen through the veil of evening mist, looked as if they might have been cut from the background of a mural painting by Puvis de Chavannes.

When the car swirled into Central Park, the blue twilight lay like a scarf upon the

landscape. The Sunday crowds were beginning to scatter and the automobiles were turning on their lights.

"Any one dining to-night with us?" asked Jack, as he handed Louise out of the car.

"Only the Taylors."

"Is De Witt coming?"

"No," replied Louise. "I didn't invite him for to-night. The Taylors don't like him."

"What time do we dine?" asked Jack.

"Half-past eight," replied Louise, as she started up the stairway.

Before ringing for Annette, Louise seated herself at her desk.

"What a long day!" she exclaimed, as she counted the hours that had passed since she was sitting in this spot. "What a long, long day!"

Taking a sheet of delicately perfumed paper from one of the pigeon-holes and dipping her pen in the heavy silver inkstand, Louise paused a moment. "Now here goes!" she said:

Dear Phil:

You will be surprised to hear that I am going to China on July 10th. Jack is opening a bank in Shang-

hai. We shall be gone at least a year. This is to say good-bye.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

LOUISE CONWAY.

"There!" said Louise. "That's over! I wish I could see the expression of Phil De Witt's face when he reads this. I know just what he will say—what he is all the time saying—'You never can depend upon a woman!'"

CHAPTER XXIV

YE SUN WILL SHINE

“**T**IME travels in divers paces with divers persons”; and during the twelve months that had passed he had galloped with the European party and had stood still with some of those who had spent this year in New York.

Life had ebbed away slowly enough with Gilbert Greene, who not only missed the gatherings at the Conways', but the whole city seemed changed with Mildred out of it. There was a sense of desolation everywhere he went.

Glancing at his calendar on the morning of June the twenty-fourth, as he was shaving, he remembered that it was just a year ago that he had watched the big steamer slipping slowly out of her dock. The picture came back vividly to him at intervals all through the day of Mildred standing out prominently among the travellers at the rail waving hand-

kerchiefs, caps and hats to upturned faces of their friends on the pier below. Mildred was wearing the lilies-of-the-valley that he had brought to say the farewell he could not speak; and as she passed from sight he fancied that her last glance was directed to him.

It was now four o'clock. Gilbert was sitting in his office in the top floor of a skyscraper on Fifth Avenue, just finishing the dictation of a letter, when he was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone on his desk.

His stenographer was too well-acquainted with Mr. Greene's expressions not to notice the excitement beneath his voice as he answered:

"Why, how are you?"

(Pause).

"When did you get in?"

(Pause).

"Yesterday? How nice of you to call me up?"

(Pause).

"That's still nicer."

(Pause).

"This evening?"

(Pause).

"Yes, with pleasure. What time?"

(Pause).

"Where are you staying?"

"All right, then. Eight o'clock. *Au revoir!*"

Gilbert turned to the stenographer:

"Where were we? Please read that last sentence?"

"If you agree with me," the stenographer read, "that the Italian villa is the best model for your site—"

"With a series of terraces to the sea-wall," added the architect, "kindly let me hear from you at an early date, and I will send you several plans.

"Faithfully yours,

"That will do, Miss North, thank you, for this afternoon. Just copy this letter and give it to me to sign. I will sign the others tomorrow morning."

A few moments later Gilbert Greene was quickly moving through the busy throng of smartly dressed shoppers on Fifth Avenue and slipping through the long lines of automobiles to his bachelor apartment.

Three hours is a long time to wait when one has an unexpected and delightful appointment in view. These three hours seemed to Gilbert the longest he had ever experienced.

At a quarter before eight he was walking down Fortieth Street; and, consequently, he arrived at Mrs. Carroll's a little ahead of time.

"It was so good of you to send for me to come right away," he said, as Mildred entered.

"I wanted to see you," replied Mildred.

Gilbert smiled. "You came home sooner than you expected,—didn't you?"

"Yes; we expected to return in October; but the two Miss Swanns had to come home on account of some money matters. Their lawyer sent for them. They are going to Baltimore to-morrow. I wasn't sorry. I am perfectly delighted to be home again."

"You had a delightful trip?"

"Wonderful," replied Mildred, "simply wonderful. Nothing happened to spoil it anywhere. First, we went to France. We landed at Cherbourg, as you know, and went directly to Paris; in August we went to Switzerland; and then we went to Italy. We spent the winter in Rome. After Easter we went back to Paris; and then we went to London. We expected to spend the summer in England; but, in the most unforeseen way, the

two Miss Swanns were suddenly called home."

"How was Paris?" asked Gilbert.

"Lovely!" exclaimed Mildred. "Lovely! There's only one Paris! I hated to leave it. We had a lovely time there. Didn't you receive any postal cards from me from Paris? I sent you several. I had to think of you in Paris, Mr. Greene."

"Yes, I did," answered Gilbert. "I did; and I ought to have acknowledged them. Please forgive me."

"I thought perhaps you didn't care for them."

"On the contrary, I was delighted to receive them. You sent me, too, all my favorite haunts. Now tell me something about London. How did you like London?"

"London? Immensely! It seemed to me more historic, somehow, than Paris. I don't know why, but it did. It is such a vast huge city—its vastness impressed me. I felt that even if Paris were picked up and placed in London it would just be swallowed up and made a quarter in London. I could never imagine London becoming a quarter of Paris. [That's the difference. London is so strange,

so peculiar, so archaic in some ways and so modern in others, mysterious, unfathomable city! And such violent contrasts! Such wealth and such poverty! Such elegance and such indifference! London seemed to me a great queen dressed in velvet and rags,—magnificent and squalid at the same time. I think London a very beautiful city—the vistas are so wonderful and the atmospheric effects most exquisite. I love St. Paul's, with its splendid dome, that seems to hover over the great capital. Indeed, Mr. Greene, whenever I think of London, I think of St. Paul's seen from London Bridge. I had my first view of St. Paul's in the moonlight; and it looked as if it were made of black velvet and snow. I shall never forget that impression. Oh, by the way, I made a discovery in St. Paul's, or rather, I think I did. When I went to a service there, I was struck by the peculiar beauty of the singing of the choristers, whose voices seemed to come from the dome and float down to us through the dim mists; and it occurred to me that Wagner may have tried to reproduce these effects in *Parsifal*, by arranging the knights, squires and youths at various stages in the dome of

Monsalvat to sing of the 'wondrous work of mercy and salvation.' "

"Yes," said Gilbert, "I shouldn't wonder. The acoustics are most peculiar in St. Paul's. Did you see the Whispering Gallery and the Geometrical Staircase?"

"Oh, yes," answered Mildred, "and the choir-stalls. Oh, those choir-stalls!"

"Aren't they lovely?" chimed Gilbert. "I remember them very well. They are by Grinling Gibbons."

Thus the friends continued to talk of London and Paris, brightened by anecdotes of Mildred's travelling experiences, until it became Gilbert's turn to give an account of himself.

An hour passed away very quickly in these pleasant paths of conversation and friendly gossip.

Presently Mildred turned to her personal affairs.

"I suppose you haven't heard, what I have just learned, Mr. Greene, that *Wild Acres* has been sold?"

"Has it?" he replied in a tone of surprise.

"Yes; and the strange part of it is," she continued, "that I don't know the name of the

purchaser. Mr. Carpenter is pledged to secrecy—the *strictest* secrecy. I suppose in time it will all come out; but just now it is very mysterious. I'd much rather know who is going to have it, though. Mr. Carpenter has arranged for me to go and see it once again."

"When are you going?"

"To-morrow."

"You'll be lonely, won't you?"

"Oh, no; Mrs. O'Toole, my old house-keeper, will be there; and she will stay with me the two or three days that I shall spend in the dear old place. I've got to look over some personal things in the attic. Oh, I forgot to tell you that all the old furniture, silver, china and glass have been sold with the house."

"That's awfully hard on you, Miss Ashton, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," answered Mildred, sadly; "but the strange Unknown wouldn't have it under any other conditions."

"Grasping brute!" muttered Gilbert, savagely.

"No, he wouldn't," continued Mildred, "and Mr. Carpenter told me I had better take the offer. In fact, he *insisted* that I should.

Mr. Carpenter seems to have taken a desperate fancy to this purchaser; and he told me that I *must* accept this wonderful offer, that nothing like it would ever come to me again. I never saw Mr. Carpenter so excited about anything before. It is all very strange!"

Mildred paused for a while and then continued: "It is terribly hard for me to let it go, Mr. Greene; but, strange as it may seem, I can stand *selling* it better than I did *renting* it two years ago. You have no idea what it cost me to give up my old home to strangers. But I've learned how to bear things philosophically. If any one had told me two years ago that I would one day be talking calmly like *this* about selling it, I should have been *furious*,—simply *furious*."

"I can't imagine your being *furious*, Miss Ashton. That adjective doesn't seem to belong to you," replied Mr. Greene.

"Mr. Greene," said Mildred, after another pause, "I'm going to ask a favor of you."

"What is it?" he inquired eagerly.

"I want you to help me invest the money that I shall get for the property."

"What will Mr. Carpenter say?"

"I don't care what he says," replied Mil-

dred. "I want *your* advice. Think it over—please—and tell me of some good investments."

Mildred chanced to look up. And in that look a new world opened to her. Gilbert Greene was gazing at her—deep down into her very heart. And his gaze, fervent and intense, held a question. Mildred's eyes fell, and silence enveloped the two. It seemed an hour to Mildred—an hour of heart searching and contest, a vivid reckoning of herself and of him, a summary of past thoughts and emotions, trivial in themselves as they happened, but now, in their total so commanding that they overwhelmed her. At length, she raised her eyes and met Gilbert's gaze again—held it till all was blurred with tears.

Then she heard him speak:

"Mildred, dear heart, I love you."

Mildred felt as if she had been caught in a whirlwind; as if her soul and spirit had been mysteriously and divinely lifted from her, swirled into space, brought back and placed in the keeping of another. She knew *now* what Love meant and that Gilbert Greene was the one love of her life, the only man for her, once and forever.

What happens? What does it? Who waves the magic wand?

One moment ago Mr. Greene and Miss Ashton were quietly talking under formal conditions. A glance—a single, deep glance—had changed the world for them. Their hearts and spirits had become united and now vibrated as one.

“Mildred,” said Gilbert softly, “will you go with me to-morrow to *Wild Acres*? I will call for you and take you down to Port Washington in my car.”

“I’d love it,” cried Mildred eagerly, “I’d like you to see *Wild Acres*. You ought to know it *now*. You will have to be interested in everything that interests me. That’s one of the penalties.”

“What are the others?” asked Gilbert. “The more the merrier for me. I adore penalties of this kind.”

“Oh, you’ll find out soon enough,” replied Mildred, airily. “At any rate, that’s one of them. You’ve got to rejoice when I rejoice and weep when I weep; and you’ve got to weep some tears with me over *Wild Acres. There!*”

“I’ll weep just as many as you like,” said

Gilbert. "Must I fill tear-bottles, or buckets? Take your choice. And now good-night,—dearest one, good-night; I'll be here to-morrow at ten."

Mrs. O'Toole came on the portico to greet Miss Mildred, when she heard the approaching automobile. She was overjoyed. Mildred was so happy to see her kind, familiar face that she did not notice the look of recognition which Mrs. O'Toole gave to Gilbert and which Gilbert ignored.

Mildred, on jumping out of the car, threw her arms around the old housekeeper and kissed her affectionately, noticing, however, that the latter had aged a good deal in the past year and that she walked with a feebler step.

"Nothing is changed, is it?" Mildred said, gaily, as she entered the hall. "I must run all over the house. Mrs. O'Toole, I feel as if I were six years old again. I must go into every nook and corner! Oh, I am so glad to be at home again. If *only* I could stay here forever!"

In the course of half an hour Mildred was seated comfortably in a big, easy chair in the library and wondering why Gilbert, who had gone to put the car into the garage, had not

returned. She was about to go in search of him, when Mrs. O'Toole came in, bringing a package and a letter.

"Mr. Greene told me to give you this, Miss Mildred," said Mrs. O'Toole, who was smiling broadly.

Mildred, greatly puzzled, took the package without a word. She opened the letter to read:

Dear Mildred:

The new owner of *Wild Acres* has asked me to see that you receive this package on your arrival.

I am going into the *Rosary* to have a smoke. Will you join me there? Yours ever,

GILBERT.

"It feels like a jewel case," said Mildred, as she looked at the strange handwriting of the address:

Miss Ashton,
Wild Acres,
Port Washington.

Please open
immediately.

Mildred's surmise was correct. A jewel case it was; but on lifting the lid of sapphire velvet instead of finding upon the white satin

a necklace, or a piece of silver, her eyes beheld two large keys. She knew them very well. The copper one was the key of the front door; the big iron one belonged to the entrance gate. The accompanying card, in the same strange autograph, read:

"These keys are for Miss Mildred Ashton, to whom Mr. Carpenter will hand the deed of *Wild Acres* to-morrow in proper form."

"I do not understand this," exclaimed the stupefied Mildred. "Who could have done such a thing? How can I accept such a gift from a stranger? I must find Gilbert and ask him what I shall do. There must surely be some mistake."

With that, Mildred hurriedly closed the case and flew out of the house. She found Gilbert waiting for her at the foot of the grass steps.

"Gilbert," cried Mildred, handing the card to him, "what can this mean? I don't understand it at all." She looked up into Gilbert's face and then:

"Why, Gilbert!—was it?—Did you?—Oh, my dear!"

"I certainly did," Gilbert answered, with

a merry twinkle in his eyes. "I bought it for you, hoping that you might love me some day; and, if not, at least I could have the home where you had spent most of your life and which I could leave to you. It is now yours, Mildred."

"No, *ours*," replied Mildred, burying her face on his shoulder.

Recovering, she said, "Come here!" And drawing him gently to the Sun-dial, "Read this."

Through the garlands of red and pink roses, deliciously sweet in the hot June sunshine, Gilbert read aloud:

"I mark ye hours,
Man notes ye time;
Spite storme and showers
Ye sun will shine."

"I came here," said Mildred, "one dreary November afternoon, two years ago, full of distress that I had to leave my old home. I stood in this very spot and read those words. They comforted me; and I resolved that I would take that message to heart and try to find the sunshine. I also resolved, then and there, that I would be a true daughter of my house and race: to bear whatever trials might

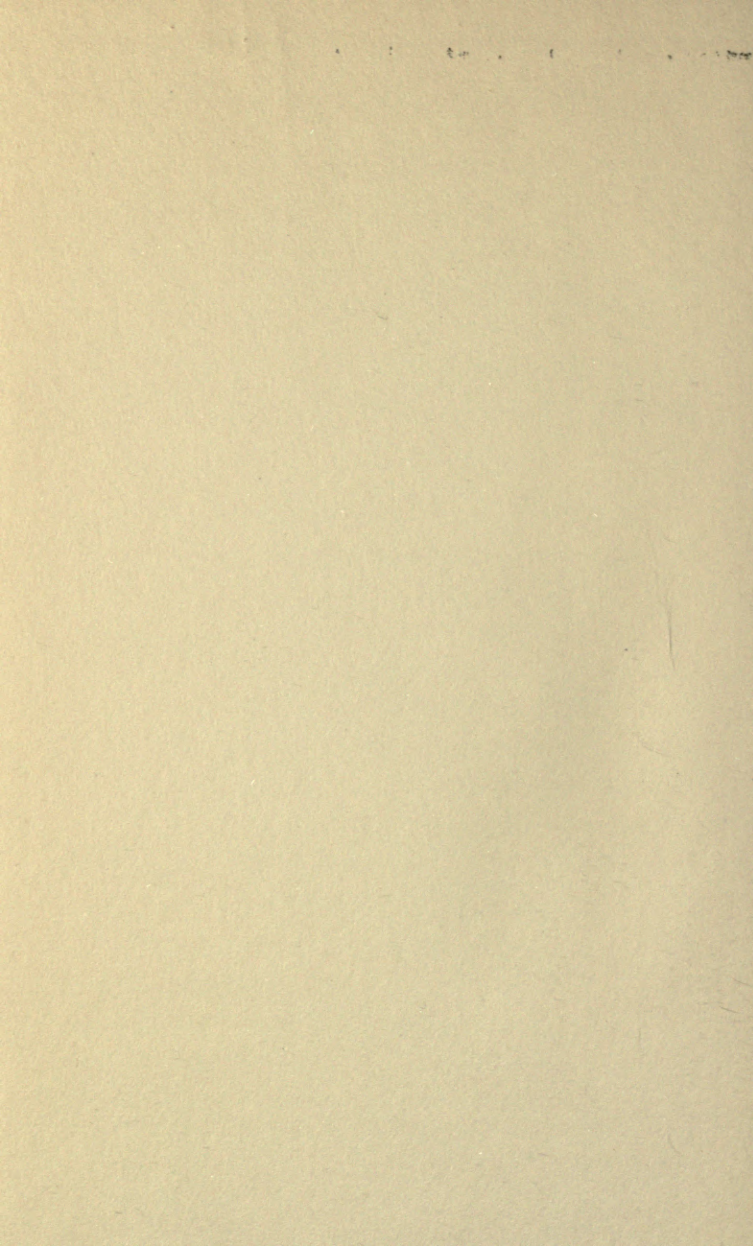
come to me with fortitude; and courageously to do whatever fortune might appoint. I have been through some hard experiences. My reward is too great! Could I ever have imagined that such a sun was shining all the time for me behind the clouds? Such a light upon my path, as you are, Gilbert, dear, for me!"

Never had The Rosary looked more beautiful than at this hour under the cloudless sky. How bright the sun! How warm and sweet the roses! How true and tender the lovers!

A thrush in a tall, red rosebush near the Sun-dial tried to voice it all in passionate song, nearly bursting his little throat in ecstasy; and his song was this:

"Sunshine and roses; light and perfume; and, better still, LOVE that makes all things perfect:—Love! Love! Love!"

THE END



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